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LIFE'S MASQUERADE.

LIFE'S MASQUERADE.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CHARLES W. WOOD, 13, TAVISTOCK ST., STRAND.
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TO

ANNIE M. ALEXANDRINA HENRY,

THESE VOLUMES ARE INSCRIBED.

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LIFE'S MASQUERADE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE BANK MANAGER.

On the twenty-second of October, 183—, the directors of the United British Banking Company held a meeting in their board-room, for the purpose of considering the propriety of opening a branch of their establishment at Y——. The mover of this scheme professed to be well acquainted with "those parts," as he called them, and energetically assured his colleagues that success must inevitably follow the adoption of his views. So just were his opinions, and so cogent his arguments, that the directors agreed to act upon his suggestions; and after a journey, for the purpose of inspecting the resources of the town, was performed by three of

the gentlemen, who, it may be needless to say, dined and travelled at the expense of the shareholders, a favourable report was handed in, and the branch bank was soon after formally declared open.

The position of manager was assigned to a young man named Frank Hamilton, who was assisted by two clerks.

All commercial men are aware that the two things necessary to maintain and render successful such speculations are first, capital, and next connection.

Of these, the Y—— bank had only the first; it therefore became the business of the manager to procure the second.

Casting his eye down a list of the principal inhabitants of the place, it encountered the name of the Reverend James Smallands, upon whom Hamilton resolved to call and solicit his assistance.

Mr. Smallands was the incumbent of St. Michael's, a venerable church, overgrown with ivy and surrounded with mouldering tombstones. Almost adjoining it was the Rectory, a small house, also overgrown with ivy, and built on a slight eminence, commanding a partial view of

the town beneath. From the eastern windows of his house, when the wind was favourable and the day clear, Mr. Smallands could see the fog and hear the hum of the chafing Metropolis of London, that lay an easy three hours' drive away. Mr. Smallands was a little old man with a bowed body, a broad-brimmed hat, and a benevolent smile. He was thin, pale, and pious, loved by his congregation, and adored by the poor. One curate only assisted him; his opposite in form and character. This gentleman, whose name was Symmonds, loved not heartily his profession. He had dreamt his existence away in schemes of a military future, and awoke only when he found himself encased in the irreparable white neck-cloth, which a pious mother had implored him to wear. Where there is no love there is little zeal. He ill-naturedly endured his calling, and Mr. Smallands good-naturedly endured him. The latter therefore derived but little help from such assistance. Nevertheless he rejoiced rather that he was thus enabled to do so much himself for the cause to which he was wedded heart and soul. An industrious curate would have rendered him unhappy; two would have expelled him from the parish. The character of Richard

Hooker, as given by Walton, was his ideal of human excellence. To live like that judicious divine, and to die like him, was his endeavour and hope. These are the models of which the imitations are always noble.

All his leisure hours were devoted to his library. He read, thought, digested, and commented, and by those who knew him was accounted a prodigy of erudition. He had published three works; one of sermons, the others commentaries on certain portions of the New Testament.

He was also a poet. But then his doggerels, as he termed his effusions, were wholly limited to the ears of his housekeeper. These he would first of all read with great satisfaction to himself; then straightway commit them to the flames, regardless of the expostulations of his ancient listener, who, though she secretly lamented not in the least degree their destruction, yet complained, in order to give her master an opportunity of repeating a favourite joke, which was this:—

"You have undergone martyrdom through *me;* now I will undergo martyrdom through *them.*"

To the house of this worthy man Hamilton repaired one morning shortly after his arrival at Y——. His future depended a very great deal upon his present success; and, to insure a success, he thought that he could not better begin than by making the parson his friend.

The door was opened to him by the housekeeper, who ushered him into a parlour, where presently entered Mr. Smallands. Hamilton rose and politely returned the parson's solemn bow: then briefly communicated to him the object of his visit, and concluded, by expressing a hope that he would not deem him intrusive for thus venturing to solicit his friendship and advice.

There was something in Hamilton's demeanour which confessed him at once a gentleman, and something in his features, in the delicacy of his hands, in the largeness and beauty of his eyes, that proclaimed his gentility old and pure; and such, indeed, was the case.

His father had boasted his descent from royalty: his mother had claimed connection with one of the oldest families of France. At an early age he had been left an orphan to the charge of an uncle, old-fashioned, and far from

wealthy, and whose chief pride after his ancestry was to boast the fact of having once shaken Sir Joshua Reynolds by the hand, and once dined with Samuel Johnson at the house of a mutual friend, where the great lexicographer had listened with complacence and approbation to certain arguments he (the uncle) had advanced. He would add, that he had communicated this to Boswell, who, however, had neglected to mention it in his "Life."

This uncle, too proud to put his nephew to commerce, and too poor to procure him a loftier position, chose an intermediate profession, and sent him as a midshipman on board an East Indiaman. He was absent four years, and on his return found his uncle dead, his house sold, his trifling fortune distributed amongst a multitude of near and remote relations, and himself apportioned with the trifling legacy of a hundred-pound note.

Wearied of the sea, Hamilton determined to devote himself to the City his uncle had so heartily contemned; and with this view he called upon an old gentleman whom he had formerly known, and begged his exertion in his favour to procure him some financial employment. The

result of this interview was his admission as clerk into that bank of which, after a trial of two years, he was now appointed to superintend the branch at Y——.

These slight details he communicated to Mr. Smallands, won perhaps by the kind and courteous questioning of the reverend gentleman, who seemed desirous of becoming more intimate with his new friend.

"Ah! I see, I see," exclaimed the parson, as Hamilton came to a pause; "you are a stranger here, and you want, of course, to cultivate the society of the place. Now, let me think how this is to be done." He remained lost in meditation for some moments, then suddenly looking up, exclaimed, "I have it! But tell me, first of all, have you dined?"

"No, sir, I have not."

"I shall feel happy if you will remain with me to dinner, then we shall be more at liberty to discuss the scheme I have planned."

Hamilton accepted the invitation with pleasure. There was something greatly encouraging in Mr. Smalland's cordiality.

"And now," continued the parson, taking Hamilton parentally by the arm, "I am going to

indulge myself in a humour with which I beg you will bear. It is a penalty I exact from all my friends. I want you to come and see my library."

And so saying he led the way into a little darkened back room, around the walls of which were arranged rows of books upon shelves. A beam of satisfaction illumined the parson's face as he contemplated this goodly show of erudition, and he took a side glance at his visitor, to see what effect it had produced upon him.

"You have indeed a fine library," said Hamilton, taking a worm-eaten volume from the shelf, and running his eye over its contents. "Ah! Boccaccio's works."

"Yes; and favour me by looking at the title-page."

Hamilton did so, and read, "*Il Decamerone di Messer G. Boccaccio: In Fiorenza*, 1481."

"I would not take twenty guineas for that book. What do you think of it, sir?"

Hamilton, not being a book-worm, did not think so warmly of it as the parson might have anticipated. Nevertheless, he said it was very curious—very, indeed—and with this mild praise Mr. Smallands seemed content.

The parson was now upon his hobby, and book after book, ancient and modern, rare and curious, was brought down, shaken, and submitted for inspection to Hamilton, who saw more solid learning in ten minutes than he had seen in twice that number of years. Mounted upon a ladder, which travelled upon wheels, and from which he would laboriously descend and push to and fro, the parson, in his dusty black and lank clothes, looked like the spirit of some ancient divine keeping watch over the repositories of the learning of the dead.

At last he pushed his ladder up into a corner, and approaching Hamilton, remarked in a subdued whisper, that he had something yet to show him which he made a point of reserving for the last; something that he prized above all his other volumes, nay, he would almost say, above all his earthly possessions. He then searched his pockets for a key, with which he opened a cupboard, and with much solemnity extracted from its extreme corner a moth-eaten volume, which he placed in Hamilton's hands, and with a cunning smile, asked him what he thought it was.

Finding it to be in Hebrew, Hamilton, who

protested that he knew not a syllable of that language, declared he could not tell.

Then the parson told him it was a Hebrew Bible, published in the year 1488, and the first edition of the first work of the kind printed in Europe. Moreover, it was rendered surpassingly valuable by having once been in the possession of the great Erasmus, who had bequeathed it to his friend Goclenius. "And now," said the parson, having concluded the genealogy of his book, and replaced it with infinite care in the cupboard, "let us to dinner."

The parson was a plain man, not only in his house and clothes, but also in his food, as Hamilton very soon found out. A basin of broth, a leg of cold lamb, and a hearty welcome to the same, were all that his host had to offer him. Nevertheless, this fare they both very heartily enjoyed, owing, perhaps, to the novelty of each other's society. A little elderly woman waited upon them, and the old housekeeper, who was evidently unused to visitors, bobbed in and out amidst much noise, instructing the little elderly woman how to act, what to serve first, what to serve next, and what not to serve at all. These hints were conveyed in a tremulous whisper up in

the corner; then the housekeeper would go out, and the little elderly woman approach the table, and travel round it, with much seeming satisfaction and content.

All this was not unobserved by Hamilton, who secretly enjoyed the manœuvrings of these primitive people, and the delight with which the parson, when the meal was concluded, dwelt upon the excellence of these simple servants.

"You will hardly believe me," said Mr. Smallands, "when I assure you that my housekeeper has been in my family thirty-six years. My two little ones, whom God in His infinite mercy has long since taken to Himself, she nursed and partly reared; and to her I owe my life; for during my wife's last illness, I slept not a wink for nine nights, and when she died my grief was so great, and my health so impaired by my long vigils, that I must have speedily followed her, had it not been for the motherly care and watchfulness of my good housekeeper." He brushed away a tear as he concluded, and touched the bell.

The housekeeper entered. "Martha," said the parson, "would you like a glass of wine, Martha? Come," as Martha drew back, and glanced with

an embarrassed look at Hamilton; "to commemorate the visit of this gentleman, who has thus honoured me with his presence at my table, you must have a glass of wine, Martha."

His hand trembled as he held it out to her, and hers trembled more as she took it. Before drinking she made a curtsy, and looked round as if preparing to make a speech, but she thought better of it, and gulped down her emotion with the wine. Then dropping another curtsy to Hamilton, and glancing with a moist eye at her master, the old creature left the room. Evidently she had made up her mind to reserve her eloquence until after the departure of the guest.

"You will pardon my little weakness, I am sure," said Mr. Smallands, glancing benevolently at Hamilton; "when you are my age," he added, with a quiet smile, "you will comprehend what a hold such disinterested faithfulness takes upon the heart."

"Sir," answered Hamilton, "many an exquisite homily has been preached upon texts far less beautiful than that which you have just illustrated."

"And which you call——?"

"Fidelity."

Mr. Smallands seemed pleased with the notion, and thought this bank manager a very superior kind of young man. He remained lost in contemplation for a few minutes, then suddenly starting, exclaimed, "Dear me! I had almost forgotten it! how very silly of me! I had something to tell you, and you might absolutely have left me without learning what it was."

"Ah, true: you *had* something to tell me," said Hamilton.

"Yes, and now you shall hear it," said Mr. Smallands. "You came to solicit my assistance to promote the interests of your bank, did you not?"

"Yes," said Hamilton.

"Well," said Mr. Smallands, "I think I can do so. To-morrow I am going to sacrifice at a shrine from which I have been absent for a very long while indeed: I mean the shrine of society! I am asked to dinner by my old friend Mr. De Courcy, and as this is the fourth time he has invited me, I can no longer consistently refuse. Now, would you like to accompany me? It is a mere family dinner, and Mr. De Courcy is one of the most hospitable of men. I can insure you a welcome, and you need be under no apprehension

of that cold civility or colder formality which scares so many young men from social intercourse."

Hamilton was greatly gratified by this kindness, which he considered also a compliment. He accepted his reverend friend's proposal with many thanks, and soon after went his way, overcome with the unexpected goodness and courtesy he had received.

Nor was the impression he had left less favourable.

I advance here as a position that, as the richest soil gives birth to the most deadly plants, so the fairest intentions sometimes result in the direst calamities. And it shall be the business of this book to prove this position correct.

CHAPTER II.

EVELEEN.

Y——, as I have said, was situated within an easy three hours' drive of London. At least its distance from the metropolis in the year 183— was fourteen or fifteen miles. Whether such be the case now, whether this distance has not been wondrously diminished by the gradual spread of those metropolitan suburbs which, month after month, and year after year, are extending into and embracing in their grasp of soot and brick, the surrounding country, I know not. But certain it is, that at the time of the commencement of this narrative, Y—— was a pretty little town, pleasantly situated, and having in its environs many charming houses and many large estates.

That the local gentry was numerous might be readily seen by taking a walk, any fine afternoon, between the hours of three and five, up the street called High Street. For here congregated

numbers of young ladies, nurses, and children, some to shop, some to ogle the few gentlemen who paraded the pavement arm-in-arm, and some to dissipate the *ennui* of a country existence.

Y—— was also a market-town, and every Wednesday was looked upon by the young ladies as a grievance and a calamity. For surely nothing could equal the state of High Street during its usurpation by the odious cattle. Pigs, cows, geese, hens, sheep, lined the pavements and filled the roads. Discordant shrieks and a tumultuous uproar deafened for awhile the hurrying passer-by; nor was this confusion owing entirely to animals with four feet; for short and bow-legged farmers, intoxicated drovers, multitudes of small boys, and the constant influx and efflux of purchasers and sellers, added to the ceaseless clamour by every variety of whistling, singing, shouting, and anathematising.

High Street ran directly through the town. It first of all brought you from the country, and, after a walk of some ten minutes or so, emitted you into it again. Halfway down this street stood a meeting-house; next door to that was a butcher's; and the house after was the bank, of which Hamilton was the manager.

About a quarter of a mile from the town the traveller would observe with some curiosity a house fronted by a strong wall, of which the entrance was a massive gate, surmounted on either side by two crouching figures of tigers. So formidable did these statues look, that the passing dog would not unfrequently utter a frightened yelp and speed away with its tail between its legs.

On the day following the events detailed in the last chapter, two persons might have been seen approaching this gate at a slow pace, and both engrossed in conversation. The one was a short, jovial-faced man, with red cheeks, bright eyes, a broad-brimmed hat, and a blue tight-fitting coat. The other was about half as tall again, with a sallow complexion, black hair and moustachios, smooth cheeks, and dressed entirely in a dark-grey costume. Sometimes the little man took his companion's arm, and listened for awhile to what was being said; sometimes he would relinquish it, and smack his hands together to emphasise some energetic reply.

The other was always calm and cool. Now and then he would shrug his shoulders, or give his left moustachio a fierce twist, or stop and eye

the little man with a penetrating glance, and then turn with another shrug, and walk on.

To an acute observer behind them their backs and gait would have been sufficient to have proclaimed their respective characters. In the broad backward-bent shoulders of the one, in the tread, sometimes hasty, sometimes angry, sometimes joyous, could be discerned a disposition open, frank, and cordial; a foe to melancholy, a lover of good things; hospitable, generous, and passionate. In the cautious, sliding steps of the other that slyly stole the ground, rather than boldly took it; in the narrow back, the long thin form, the lank black hair, the completely *up and down* figure, there was revealed cunning, and with cunning, hypocrisy, selfishness, sensuality, a contracted mind, a character cold and dispassionate, and a demeanour always studied, always insincere.

The short man, by his hair growing thin and grey, seemed about fifty years old: his companion not more than twenty-four or five.

Their conversation was interrupted by their arrival at the gate, and the young man held out his hand to bid adieu.

"Nonsense, Murray, you mustn't talk of re-

turning yet," exclaimed his friend, seizing his arm and pushing aside the proffered hand; "I am going to have an old friend of mine to dinner with me to-day: stop and make one of the company."

"May I ask who it is?"

"Certainly: it's Smallands, the parson."

"Ha, ha! That's a good joke, De Courcy! To ask *me* to meet a clergyman, the society which of all, as you well know, I consider the slowest and the most intolerable. And Smallands, too! Dear, dear—the heaviest of the heavy!"

Mr. De Courcy looked rather surprised at this sally.

"Upon my word, Murray, you have a most admirable way of saying unpleasant things."

"Look! I apologise. 'Pon my soul, I had no intention to offend you. Have I done so? Yes; I have. Well, you forgive me?"

"Pshaw! Tell me, did you ever dine with Smallands?"

"No; but I know him well."

"Ah, well then, give me leave to tell you, that so far from being slow, he is downright good society—at least good for such as are content to

forego the ephemeral humour of everyday life for the solid wit of a learned thinker. It is the rarest thing in the world to get him out, and if you are wise you'll stop and meet him. Is it settled?"

Murray was about to reply, when just at that moment his eye caught sight of two figures coming in the distance up the road.

"I say," he exclaimed, pointing, "isn't that the parson?"

De Courcy put his glass to his eye, and after a moment's reconnoitre, said it was. "And who's that with him, I wonder? Come, let us go and meet him. He's an honest soul."

They walked towards them, and presently met Hamilton and Mr. Smallands, who were coming to the house. There was some bowing and shaking of hands, and then Mr. Smallands introduced Hamilton. "Glad to make your acquaintance," said De Courcy, heartily; "any friend of my dear Mr. Smallands is always welcome with me. Manager of the new bank, eh? Ah, is it going to be a success? We are all poor here," he continued, wisely shaking his head; "all very poor here—very little money indeed, and that always in use. Isn't it so, Murray? By the

way, let me introduce you. Mr. Murray, Mr. Hamilton."

The first bowed stiffly, the second cordially; but observing the other's stiffness, he drew himself haughtily up, and turned half aside.

"Handsome fellow!" whispered De Courcy to Mr. Smallands. "Eveleen will be in love with him: you mark me."

The parson smiled and glanced meaningly towards Murray. De Courcy observed the look and answered it with a slight shrug. Then they all walked towards home together: Hamilton by the side of his reverend friend.

If the gate, and the stone guardians, and the thick wall presented outwardly a rugged appearance, all was at least smooth and smiling within. In the centre of the garden that fronted the house laughed and sparkled a handsome fountain, that precipitated its waters into a marble reservoir brilliant with gold and silver fish. The flowers were bright and beautiful, the walks admirably kept, and the flower-beds cut into grotesque shapes with a most amusing exactness. After the heat and dust of the road there was something intensely refreshing in this scene, its charm heightened by a silentness, broken only by

the occasional piping of a bird from the heavy autumn foliage of some trees, standing so as to shade the house from the morning sun.

De Courcy conducted his guests into a prettily-furnished drawing-room, where, seated at the table, sat a lady reading.

On their entrance she rose hastily, bowed, and would have retired but for De Courcy, who detained her by the arm, and laughingly led her back to her seat.

"Come, Eveleen," he exclaimed, "you mustn't leave us poor men alone. You who read so much poetry ought surely to know how valued woman's society is by man. Ah, Mr. Smallands," he added, turning to the clergyman, "what would be life without woman's bright smile to illumine it?"

Mr. Smallands smiled solemnly, then relapsing into gravity, went over to where Miss De Courcy was sitting, and asked her what she was reading.

There is something in a clergyman's presence that reassures all women. Eveleen looked up and answered him with a smile. But in the meantime De Courcy had taken Hamilton by the hand and was leading him to his daughter.

"Mr. Hamilton, that is my daughter Eveleen; Miss Eveleen, this is Mr. Hamilton, manager of our new bank at Y——."

Hamilton bowed, and in doing so, noticed Murray's reflection in a mirror turn aside, as if to conceal a smile. Hamilton glanced quickly round, and observed him turning over the leaves of a volume on a side table.

An indescribable feeling took possession of Hamilton's heart: instinctively he felt that Murray's smile was one of contempt—of ridicule—for a calling which he doubtless esteemed humiliating and low.

But all thought of others was soon suspended in the contemplation of the girl who sat before him. Never, until now, had he seen his ideal of feminine beauty embodied. In one brief moment he had become the slave, the fool, of an absorbing passion.

Every woman that Heaven creates is destined to please some man. That man is not often found. When he is, the mutual bliss is supreme.

Eveleen De Courcy was born to please—to please! the word is tame—to fascinate, to inthral Hamilton. Their lot was sealed in a single glance.

Let not the frigid philosopher talk of the necessity of time waiting upon the loves of young people to confirm or prove unstable their dreams. Time is annihilated by the flash of a bright eye —one burning vow melts the present into the past, and renders the unborn future living.

Eveleen De Courcy was fair. Hamilton admired fair girls. She had masses of hair, golden as if sungilt, and enveloping her head as if in a halo. Hamilton's idea of perfection was golden hair. She had dark blue eyes, their dreamy depths fraught with a world of tenderness and love. Hamilton sometimes wrote poetry: his stanzas were nearly all addressed to an imaginary "Her of the dark-blue eye." Her costume was simple; a rose in her hair, and white muslin, sufficiently opened at the neck to modestly reveal a snowiness that would have distracted St. Anthony from his devotions, and called Apollo once more from the skies to pursue again this fairer Daphne. All this Hamilton adored. Beauty unadorned was to him beauty indeed. Wonder not, then, that from that moment his waking and his sleeping thoughts presented him with but one vision: Eveleen De Courcy.

Alas! From the romantic to the common-

place there is but a step. Whilst Hamilton's whole thoughts were absorbed with this new passion, came a fat-calved footman to dissipate his reverie by the tame words, "Dinner is served, sir."

Murray offered his arm to Eveleen, who accepted it—Hamilton thought, and chuckled as he thought—shrinkingly. The others followed in a group, the parson vehemently expatiating on the merits of a certain work which he had beheld lying on the table.

The first half-hour at a dinner-table is usually dull. People are hungry: and nature, o'erleaping for awhile all conventional restraint, asserts her primitive freedom and obeys her own dictates in silence. He who spoke generally had his mouth full, and those who were supposed to listen, secretly congratulated themselves upon being better employed. As for poor Mr. Smallands—he, good soul, accustomed to deprive himself of all luxury at home, felt that, for once in a way, he might indulge a carnal appetite without any great violation of his duty as a divine, and accordingly fell to his host's cheer with great heartiness of enjoyment.

Human contentment, however, soon finds a

tongue. Its first impulse is to sing, its next to talk. Custom, that prohibits the one at a dinner-table, sanctions the other, and in a short while everybody was busily engaged in delivering to the other his opinions and thoughts.

Murray was seated next to Eveleen, and endeavoured with great assiduity to engage her in conversation. In this he was pretty successful, though sometimes he elicited from her a "yes," when it should have been "no," and *vice versâ.* Had he been more observant, he would have remarked the frequent glance she threw in the direction of Hamilton, who sat opposite, but who, with the diffidence of first love, kept his gaze obstinately fixed on Mr. De Courcy's countenance.

When the dinner was over the party rose and went for a stroll in the garden. The evening was lovely; the sunset glorious; the deep blue of the eastern sky superb. The air was filled with the perfume of flowers, agitated by the evening breeze, that sighed softly amongst the leaves of the trees. Now and then some drowsy bird would wake the surrounding silence by its sleepy note, or there would fall upon the ear the remote cry of the distant drover urging homeward his cattle.

United to the presence of Eveleen all this was the finest poetry to Hamilton. He leant over the balustrade, overlooking the wide extent of land which De Courcy laughingly called his back garden, and remained lost in meditation. Mr. Smallands aroused him by lightly laying his hand upon his arm. "Isn't this lovely?"

"Lovely, indeed."

"Mr. De Courcy wants you to accompany him in a stroll through his grounds; would you like to do so?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

At that moment De Courcy came towards him, holding out his cigar-case. "Of course, you smoke," he said.

"Thank you; I do," Hamilton answered, taking one of the fat, fine cigars offered; "but," he added, "perhaps Miss De Courcy——"

"Not at all, Mr. Hamilton," exclaimed Eveleen, anticipating the objection; "on the contrary, I am most unfemininely partial to the smell of a cigar."

"Thanks to me," said her father, chucking her under the chin, and slily winking to the others. "I cured her of that stupid repugnance which all women feign to tobacco. I never knew a young

and pretty girl whose objection to the smell of a cigar was really honest, and who couldn't be soon brought to confess that she liked it. When I was a young man I used to test a woman's character by my cigar-case. I would pull it out before her, and if I found she didn't frown, I knew her in a moment to be of the right sort. Ha! ha! ha! Tobacco's the thing to test women by!" And the old fellow, laughing heartily at his own eccentricity, seized Hamilton by one arm, and the parson by another, and commenced dragging them off.

Murray stood alone by the side of Eveleen. The circumstance possibly might have afforded him some satisfaction, for it promised at least a *tête-à-tête* ramble with a young lady to whom, the reader will have observed, he was by no means indifferent. But whether Eveleen had had enough of his society at the dinner-table, she did not scruple to interrupt his satisfaction by hastening after her father with a request to be permitted to join the party. Of course, this was readily granted, and Murray was left to pace the gravel walk by himself, evidently vexed, if, indeed, not greatly irritated, as could be seen by the smart manner in which he lopped off the head of certain adjacent

flowers with his cane. Mr. De Courcy remarked his absence, and turned and halloed to him to come on; but he shook his head, and taking a seat on the doorstep, lighted a cigar, and vigorously commenced blowing thick clouds of smoke into the air.

So observing him to be settled, Mr. De Courcy pleaded familiarity of friendship for his apparent discourtesy, and the party continued its route.

The commencement of this walk was signalised by De Courcy expatiating at length to Hamilton upon the size of his grounds, their produce, their expenses, their eligible situation, and the promise they afforded of becoming by-and-by greatly valuable for building, &c. From this discourse the transition was easy to the subject of the rapidly increasing population of Great Britain, and another step led the old gentleman into downright politics.

Now Mr. De Courcy was a Whig, and Mr. Smallands, who followed behind with Eveleen, it is perhaps needless to say, was a Tory. Whenever, therefore, politics were broached between these two persons, a strong and long argument ensued. Thus, ere Mr. De Courcy had well

delivered himself of his opinion on the existing ministry, Mr. Smallands was alongside of him opposing his views with an eloquence befitting rather the votary of Westminster than the disciple of Hooker. The result was that, before many moments had elapsed, Hamilton discovered himself insensibly dropping behind, and only awoke to the full conviction that such was actually the case, to find himself by the side of Eveleen.

What trifling chit-chat first ensued between this pair it would be tedious to record; but when the two elder ones had concluded their declamation, Mr. De Courcy turned to see what had become of his companions, and observed them at a distance slowly following, evidently engaged in deep conversation.

De Courcy smiled, and nudged his reverend companion lightly with his elbow. "Didn't I tell you," said he, "that Eveleen would tumble in love with your handsome friend?"

"And Murray?" quoth Mr. Smallands.

"Murray be——" A dangerous epithet was surely about to follow that *be;* but the parson suddenly drew himself erect, and gazed sternly at vacancy, so that Mr. De Courcy stopped him-

self with a jerk, and then, in a subdued voice, murmured, " hanged."

" He is courting Eveleen, is he not ?"

" I believe he is."

" And what is your child's opinion of him ? "

" 'Pon my word, I have never asked her. I let them fight it out between them. If they like each other, good and well. They have my consent."

Mr. Smallands remained silent. They were now awaiting the approach of the loitering couple, who in a short while joined them. Eveleen's cheek was slightly flushed, and her eyes sparkled with uncommon brilliance.

Evidently the walk had done her good.

" Well," asked Mr. De Courcy, bluntly, " and what have you been talking about so earnestly."

Eveleen stole a timid glance at Hamilton, who promptly answered, " all sorts of things."

" You've not been hard up then for conversation, eh ! " and De Courcy laughingly shook Eveleen by the arm. " But," he added, suddenly, " what will Murray think of our neglect ? Come, let us make haste to join him."

They found him still seated where they left him, his body bent, and making figures of eight

on the walk with his cane. He rose as they advanced, and went towards them with a smile. "I hope you have enjoyed your walk," he said. "What is your opinion of Mr. De Courcy's grounds, Mr. Hamilton?" There was an air of cordiality in his manner which Hamilton had not noticed before. He answered that he thought they were remarkably fine.

"A man of taste, my friend De Courcy, eh? And now, gentlemen, having been left alone so long, I think I have a right to demand your assistance to entertain me. And in order to enforce my proposition, I depute you, Mr. De Courcy, to request your fair daughter to favour us with a little of her charming music."

This request was speedily complied with, and in a short while the party found themselves assembled in the drawing-room listening to Eveleen's sweet voice.

Before leaving, Hamilton received a cordial invitation from De Courcy to come and dine with him whenever he had nothing better to do; an invitation which needed not the quiet pleading of Eveleen's eyes to make him accept.

Their route lying all in the same direction, Mr. Smallands, Murray and Hamilton walked

home together. The night was fine though dark; and the parson, a cautious man, had borrowed a lantern from De Courcy, which he now held before him, and which made him feel, as he himself declared, just like an animated "will o' the wisp," so uncertain were his footsteps, and so unsteady the lantern that swayed to and fro in his hand.

Murray, who seemed in excellent humour, enlivened the monotony of the walk by many capital anecdotes, and some smart sayings, by which his companions found him to be something of a wit. He seemed studiously desirous of ingratiating himself in Hamilton's good opinion, applauding with much laughter everything that he said, and enlarging upon his humorous hints with a view of illustrating by his own wit the occasional wit of his companion.

They had now come to a cross road, where Murray bade his friends good night, warmly shaking hands with Hamilton, of whom he said he was enchanted to make the acquaintance. They then separated, the parson and his young friend continuing their journey in the direction of High Street.

When some twenty yards divided them,

Murray suddenly stopped and looked behind him. The receding figures of his late companions were faintly apparent in the obscurity of night. His face grew darkened, a heavy scowl contracted his eyebrows, the merry expression of his eye was replaced by a gleam of wild ferocity, and doubling his fist he shook it in the direction of the taller of the two figures, whilst between his clenched teeth he muttered, "You have triumphed to-day; but it will be my turn to-morrow!"

Then letting fall his arm, he turned upon his heel and suddenly resumed his way.

CHAPTER III.

NATHANIEL SLOMAN.

THERE had been sent from London, with Hamilton, two clerks, of whom one was named Gamyn, and the other Sloman. The first was a red-headed, pink-cheeked young man, harmless, willing, and about nineteen years old. The other was dark, with a hooked nose, a keen cunning eye, ringlets, long arms and fingers, and to crown all, he possessed a hump.

The two young men when they had first settled at Y——, occupied the same lodgings. But after they had lived together for a week they quarrelled, and Sloman turned Gamyn out to look for other accommodation.

Sloman, though not a Jew, had Jewish blood circulating in his veins. Of this he was ashamed. His features plainly spoke his origin; nevertheless he imagined that by going to church people would take him to be a Christian. This

was his religion: to avoid being considered a Jew.

Though his hump was irksome, he sometimes laughed at it. Though his arms and fingers were unusually long, he boasted that they possessed uncommon strength; sometimes he would congratulate himself before others upon being possessed of these members, and would deride those whose limbs were in proportion. Hence it will be seen, that though his deformity was an unpleasant, it was not a sore subject.

But to call him a Jew was to convert him into a dangerous enemy. This was an insult he never forgave or forgot. Once only had it occurred to him. When in the bank in London, a young clerk, provoked by something he had said, retorted by calling him a Jew. The next day a twenty-pound note was found missing from the till. All the clerks were compelled to stop until the error was detected. Some attributed it to one of the cashiers' inaccuracy of computation: and the man diligently went over again the whole day's work, but to no purpose; the money was wanting, and the question, where is it? yet remained to be answered. Presently Sloman was observed to enter the manager's

room, and by-and-by that dignitary came forward and summoned one of the clerks to come to him. A young man obeyed the call, and Sloman resumed his place at his desk. Soon after the manager announced that the note had been recovered. And the clerks went home.

Next day a young clerk was found to be absent. He was reported to the manager, who informed the reporter that he had been dismissed for having abstracted the twenty-pound note the preceding evening. "I searched him," continued the manager, "on the strength of a hint whispered to me by Mr. Sloman; and found the money in one of his pockets. I would not give him in charge, although I was irritated by his impious assurance of innocence; so I sent him home to his mother—a widow, I believe," added the manager nonchalantly, and turned to a newspaper.

The directors marked their approbation of Sloman's acuteness by raising his salary. Only himself, however, knew that, two days before, the clerk who had been dismissed had called him a Jew.

The Y—— bank had been now established a fortnight, and by degrees business came in, and

the promise of success slowly began to settle down to a certainty.

One morning two girls entered to change a five-pound note. On seeing Sloman they began to laugh, and one shook hands with him. While they were conversing at one side, a tall, dark young man entered, and requested to see the manager. The other clerk stepped into the backroom, and summoned Hamilton, who on seeing the stranger came hurriedly forward and shook hands with him.

"And so, Mr. Murray," he exclaimed, "you have come to us at last?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I wish to deposit five hundred pounds with you: your rate of interest is good." And taking out his pocket-book he extracted from it six one hundred pound Bank of England notes, and laid them on the counter.

"Here are five," he said, "and I shall feel greatly obliged by your letting me have gold for this one, as I have numerous small bills to pay. As soon as you can, too," he continued, turning to Sloman, to whom Hamilton had given the note, "as I am in a hurry to catch the coach to London."

Sloman opened the drawer of the till, and

found there only forty sovereigns. Hamilton gave him the key of the strong-room, and bade him fetch some bags of gold up.

He was a long time gone, and Murray, who did not seem much inclined for conversation, impatiently paraded the floor, ever and anon going to the door and then returning to the counter.

"Your clerk is very dilatory," he exclaimed at last.

"He is, indeed," replied Hamilton; then going to the top of the staircase, which was placed in the corner, and had a hatchway like the hold of a ship, he shouted out, "Come, bear a hand, there, Mr. Sloman."

But still Mr. Sloman lingered below, and Hamilton now thoroughly angry, turned to the other clerk, and exclaimed in an irritable voice, "Go down stairs and see what that hump-backed Jew is about!"

At the same moment Sloman's head appeared on a level with the floor.

The speech was wanton. But it had escaped Hamilton even ere he was conscious that it had been expressed. It is true that he had been a sailor; and any one who has been to sea perfectly well knows that impatience amongst seamen is

by no means scrupulous in its choice of terms. Hamilton, however, blushed scarlet, and would instantly have apologised for the insult, but he believed that Sloman had not heard him.

Whether he had or not, there was nothing in the expression of his features to have given one much insight into his thoughts. His face was the least bit paler than usual, and his lips rather hardly compressed. There was something, however, in his eyes, which Murray, who was regarding him with some degree of attention, noticed with a slight start. The pupil of the eye emitted a faint light, as if being consumed by an internal fire. This Murray only observed when Sloman looked directly at him; the next moment his eyes were following the movements of his fingers, busied with counting the gold.

Murray placed the money in a bag, then shaking hands with Hamilton, and nodding to Sloman, he left the office. Hamilton retired to his little back room.

The two girls took for the note the money that Sloman gave them, and went away. Before going one made a remark to the other, in a low voice, whereat the other laughed, and then they both glanced at Sloman.

The remark was inaudible to Sloman, save one word. That was "Jew."

He seated himself upon his stool, and leaned his head upon his hands, and seemed intensely absorbed in the contemplation of the ledger before him. Once he turned to observe Gamyn. The clerk's back was towards him, and he was busily engaged in writing.

Sloman took out a pocket handkerchief, and hurriedly wiped away a large tear drop that had fallen upon the page of his ledger.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE.

HAMILTON had become a frequent visitor at the De Courcys'. He had many other acquaintances, but the old gentleman and his daughter he most regularly attended. His good friend, the parson, was not forgotten; but in spite of his constant amiability, to this venerable student, such visits were not always welcome. The most well-loved being, you know, will interrupt the perusal of a book; and a sermon may be marred by a single knock at the door. This Hamilton intuitively discovered, and became less prodigal in his visits to Mr. Smallands.

But at the De Courcys' there was always a welcome, and, what was better than a welcome, Eveleen. To walk with her, to converse, to listen to those charmingly-sung melodies, with which, after dinner, the old gentleman was wont to have himself lulled to slumber, and to have her all to

himself for at least an hour,—for De Courcy's sleep was extended or limited to this duration of time,—were joys which, by their frequency, became more and more endeared to him. He had loved her from the moment he had seen her, and now that a month had rolled away since they had first met, his love had become the one supreme passion of his life; it had taken root in his heart, and was nourished by every smile, every glance, every accent of Eveleen.

M. De Courcy was one of those easy-going men who are content to let people do exactly as they like; not from any selfish desire not to be troubled with the business of others, but because they are willing to believe that what people naturally perform they naturally like, and are therefore most happy when they are suffered to pursue umolested their own inclinations.

He had once or twice bantered Eveleen on the subject of Hamilton, but had received no other reply save such as the conscious blush or the downcast eye is capable of giving.

One evening when Murray was present, he said to Eveleen, "Well, my pretty one, tell me, what is going to be the finale of this charming flirtation between you and Mr. Hamilton?"

Eveleen cast a reproachful look at her father; but besides being short-sighted, the old gentleman had a heart wholly insensible to, not only the eloquence of a glance, but even the pathos of a sigh. So turning to Murray he asked, "And what's *your* opinion, since Eveleen won't give me hers?"

Murray, who was employed in turning over the pages of a book, pretended not to hear the question; but, after a short pause, changed the subject by asking him what he thought of the conduct of the Tory Lord ——. Here was a subject upon which De Courcy loved to descant, and in a moment Eveleen and her flirtation were forgotten.

But shortly after Eveleen had retired for the night, and whilst the two gentlemen were lighting their cigars, Murray, in a nonchalant manner, asked De Courcy what he thought of Hamilton.

"A fine fellow," was the answer.

"I agree with you; and he seems to have more of the gentleman about him than is often to be met with in men of his walk of life."

"I believe you. I consider him quite a gentleman."

"He is poor, though."

"True; but that doesn't render him less gentlemanly."

"No, but I should fancy it must affect him in his position as a suitor to Miss De Courcy."

"Ah! I want to have your opinion of this matter. What do you think of it?"

"I do not believe," replied Murray, "that it would be very difficult to discover my feelings."

"Of course: I know you're in love with Eveleen."

"Heart and soul."

"Therefore you can't contemplate with much satisfaction this trespasser into your domains. But tell me, have you ever avowed your passion to Eveleen?"

"No; at least not verbally; although my actions, I fancy, would and have sufficiently discovered my sentiments."

"Well, before you get jealous of Hamilton, you should, first of all, find out whether Eveleen cares for you or not. Perhaps this very flirtation may be a ruse of hers to pique you into a confession of love, eh? Who can divine a woman's heart?"

"Thanks for the suggestion; I shall adopt

it at the very earliest opportunity. It is my cursed timidity that has hitherto stood in my way; your daughter's eyes, powerful enough to provoke a very schoolboy into a declaration of love, have the precisely opposite effect upon me. I approach potent with long matured resolutions, when, pouff!—one glance of those eyes melts them all into the thinnest air. Had the god Cupid ever such a drivelling votary!"

"Please yourselves! please yourselves!" exclaimed De Courcy, exhaling a thin long line of smoke from between his lips. "If you love her, and she loves you, marry and be blest. If she loves Hamilton, and he asks her of me, why, being a gentleman and a good fellow, and, and—well, well; if they love each other, you won't trouble 'em, will you?"

Murray's mouth widened with a harsh and peculiar smile; then his features suddenly assumed a look of almost stern gravity, and his hand slightly trembled as he raised his tumbler to his lips.

"And now, Mr. De Courcy," he said: and, in spite of his self-control, which, from long practice, had grown easy to him, there was an air of visible embarrassment in his manner as he spoke:

"to change from a subject which, to me, is inexhaustible and always delightful, to one so very unpleasant that I have hesitated to mention it until it is imperative that it should be at once discussed. I have to tell you something which, as your informant, I am afraid will place me before you in a rather unamiable light."

De Courcy took his cigar from his mouth, and his features assumed an expression of anxiety. "What is it?" he asked.

"Bad news cannot be too briefly spoken. In a few words this is it:—your bill of five thousand pounds drawn upon us and accepted by Mr. Wynkin has been dishonoured."

The cigar dropped from De Courcy's hand; his eyes dilated with a look half of terror, half of despair; in a low and broken voice he exclaimed, "Impossible!"

"It is, unfortunately, only too true. Mr. Wynkin was declared insolvent the day before yesterday."

"And the endorsers?" De Courcy inquired, eagerly.

"One sailed for New York the same evening of Wynkin's declared bankruptcy; the other is nowhere to be found."

De Courcy rose and paced the room in silence

for some moments. Then, turning to Murray, he asked, "What is to be done?"

Murray shrugged his shoulders, and took a sip from his tumbler.

"And your firm?"

"My firm is inflexible. You know what ship-brokers are. My partner says he must have the money."

"I cannot pay him."

The tone in which this was uttered was full of despair.

Again he asked, "What is to be done?" and again Murray shrugged his shoulders. Then there came a pause, and Murray anxiously fidgetted with his watch-chain. At last he spoke. His voice was subdued and soft—almost musical.

"Mr. De Courcy, it is now three years since I first had the happiness of enrolling myself amongst the number of your friends. During that time,—a short lifetime, sir, for one of my age,—I have enjoyed your society, I have partaken of your hospitality, and have learnt, sir, not only to value you as a friend, but to esteem you as a man. It is now eighteen months since your daughter left school, and since I had the pleasure of being introduced to her by you. For

eighteen months, then, I have been fostering in my heart an affection for your child, such as you will hardly credit, and such as she will, perhaps, never do me the justice to believe. For eighteen months I have enjoyed her conversation with delight, have accepted each little token of her regard for me, either by action or word, with a hidden joy; have fondly lingered over the most trivial accent addressed to me that has fallen from her lips,—in short, sir, for eighteen months I have loved your daughter Eveleen in secret. Though I was conscious of the truth of my passion, I was not aware of either its depth or force until Mr. Hamilton came between me and her like a blight, withering each fairest hope before me, and interrupting those schemes of future happiness which I had had the vanity to plan and to trust."

He paused, and Mr. De Courcy, who had been listening to him with attention, encouraged him to proceed by an approving nod.

"I will be candid and plain. You are called upon to pay five thousand pounds, a debt which, though perhaps at any other time, would be sufficiently easy for you to discharge, is, at present, a matter of annoyance, and, I may presume, of

difficulty. Knowing this," he continued, unbuttoning his coat and extracting from it his pocket-book, "I have ventured to assume the privilege of a friend, and beg to hand you a blank cheque signed, which you can fill up to what amount you may think necessary to discharge your obligations."

There was something in this act of generosity which touched De Courcy to the quick. He sprang forward and grasped Murray's hand with an ardour that proclaimed the heartiness of his gratitude.

"You are good—you are good," was all he could say.

"And now, may I ask you a small favour in return?"

"My life—my life—anything!"

"Will you assist me to make your daughter Eveleen my bride?"

"If a father's voice hath aught of authority in it," replied De Courcy, raising one hand solemnly to heaven, "she shall be yours."

A gleam of joy illumined Murray's eyes, and he turned his head to conceal the smile of triumph that wrinkled his features.

"But Mr. Hamilton? Suppose he should al-

ready have engaged your daughter's affections?" he said.

"I will nip his courtship in the bud: he shall not have her."

Murray pressed his hand in silence, and De Courcy continued:

"Besides, although I esteem the young man, I know nothing of him. His position sufficiently declares his means; and I will never allow Eveleen to render her future unhappy by uniting herself to a poor man."

It will be frequently found, that when a good-hearted man is under an obligation to another, he will adapt himself to the views of his friend, even though they should be uncongenial to his own.

This was a phase in De Courcy's character which Murray had read once before. He knew his man, and knew also that he would be assisted by him, heart and soul. He left the house with a heart elated by the promise of the evening, his host accompanying him to the door, and repeating his thanks as he warmly bade him good-night.

At six o'clock on the following evening, Hamilton left the Bank to pay a visit to the De Courcys. He was conducted by the servant into the drawing-room, where an elderly lady, who

performed at once the part of governess and companion to Eveleen, was seated at the piano, laboriously spelling out the overture to a new opera that had then lately appeared.

Seeing who it was, she rose and bowed, and Hamilton taking a seat, asked after Mr. and Miss De Courcy.

"Did not the servant," inquired the governess, whose name was Marriott, "inform you that Mr. De Courcy left this morning for London?"

"No."

"How very silly of him! Yes. Mr. De Courcy received this morning a letter demanding his presence at once at some office or other in the city."

"And Miss De Courcy, has she accompanied him?"

"No; I believe she is in the garden."

At that moment the door opened, and Eveleen entered the room. She wore upon her head a large straw hat, from which escaped a profusion of her fair hair, disarranged perhaps by some recent exercise. Her cheeks were dyed with a rich colour, and as she stood at the door smiling at Hamilton, he thought he had never seen her look more fascinatingly beautiful.

"I find I am an intruder, Miss De Courcy," he said, rising and advancing towards her. "Until informed by Miss Marriott, I was unaware of the absence of your father."

"Oh, no; you are never an intruder," Eveleen answered, laughing. "We are always so glad to see you. But won't you come into the garden? it is so beautiful out, and this room seems so dreadfully close and musty, after the fresh air."

Such an invitation could not of course be refused. So they went out;—the governess with a white handkerchief tied around her head, following behind;—it being her business to look after Eveleen during her father's absence.

Of the presence of this useless companion Hamilton was not aware, until, glancing around, he observed her solemnly pursuing them.

He looked down at the sweet girl by his side, and exclaimed with a smile, "I thought we were only two, but I find we are three."

"Oh, you mean Miss Marriott," replied Eveleen without turning her head. "But she is easily got rid of, if you like."

"Will you try the experiment? I am curious to see how duennas are to be dismissed."

"Miss Marriott," said Eveleen, stopping and

addressing that elderly person, "there is a new volume of Moore's poems in my room, on the table, and the leaves want cutting: do you mind doing so, that I may have it ready for this evening?"

"I anticipated the request, Miss Eveleen," replied Miss Marriott, imperturbably, "and cut them myself this morning, soon after they were sent from the shop."

Eveleen turned and resumed her way, with the least possible pout.

"She is too clever for you," whispered Hamilton.

"Is she though!" retorted Eveleen, glancing defiance at him from her shaded eyes. She walked on in silence for a few moments, and then suddenly slackening her pace, allowed Miss Marriott to approach her side.

Eveleen commenced a conversation with her. The subject was music; and presently there sprung up a little argument: and Hamilton was appealed to. The question was, a certain air from one of the operas, which Eveleen hummed, and said it was from "Don Giovanni."

This Miss Marriott had contradicted; and then Hamilton was consulted. He declared he did

not know the opera well, but fancied Miss Marriott was in the right. A smile of triumph sat upon this lady's features as she exclaimed "I am certain of it."

But so was Eveleen; and as neither would agree, there was only one way of settling the argument. This was, for Miss Marriott to fetch the opera in question, and vindicate her musical knowledge by proving the air not to be Mozart's.

All this was accomplished in five minutes, and Hamilton found himself alone with Eveleen—laughing heartily at this display of feminine cunning.

"It is really very unpleasant to be watched so closely, is it not?" said Eveleen. "One would imagine that I was the most wilful of beings, constantly demanding a rigid surveillance. When papa is at home, I do just as I like: but the moment he is absent, Miss Marriott commences to play the dragon."

Hamilton quite agreed with her: and they walked on a short while without speaking, mutually embarrassed, though they knew not exactly why. At last they came to a seat, beneath a beautiful willow-tree, whose sweeping branches

were bent down and confined to the earth so as to fashion a charming summer-arbour.

Here Hamilton proposed that they should seat themselves: an arrangement into which Eveleen entered with apparent pleasure.

"Miss Marriott," she said, "will never know where we are. Won't it be delicious to see the poor old thing searching about for us!"

It was a quiet evening, and though yet daylight, one or two stars in the darker eastern sky were visible. The air was sweet with the rich fragrance exhaled by the autumnal flowers and leaves; and now and then might be heard the tiny note of some evening insect, some late wassailer still in search of amusement when all its honest brother insects were in bed and asleep. It was a poetry-provoking scene, and Hamilton speedily felt its influence.

"In such a night,"

he began,

> "Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew;
> And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
> And ran dismayed away."

And a sweet low voice by his side took up the strain, and replied—

"In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage."

There was something in the word *love*, uttered by those lips, that thrilled through his being; a flood of wild, of glorious, of happy emotions swept over his heart: he took a hasty glance at the fair form by his side, and the next moment his hand was around her waist, and he was pouring his glowing love into her ear.

Her cheek crimsoned, but she did not repulse him. As if conscious that it had at length found its life's resting-place, the fair head was rested upon his breast, and her eyes were turned upon his—speaking deep love from their dark depths, in which was expressed the purity of the spirit within that animated them to their mellow radiance.

And as if emblematical of their future, a faint wind arose and sighed sadly through the leaves of the weeping-willow that overshadowed these lovers.

But soon they heard a voice calling: and Eveleen started to her feet.

"It is Miss Marriott!" she exclaimed. "She must not find us here!"

When they encountered this elderly lady she seemed frightened and pale.

"Goodness gracious me!" she said, "where *did* you get to, Miss Eveleen? I have been calling you until I am positively hoarse!" Which, indeed, appeared the case, for she spoke huskily.

"We were down in the lower walk," replied Eveleen; "and the moment we heard you, we came."

"Well, I've brought 'Don Giovanni;' but it's too dark to see it now. However, I have carefully looked through it, and the air you hummed is *not* in, as I thought."

Eveleen, who was occupied with considerations of a rather different nature, drily answered—

"Oh!"

But Hamilton, who saw the necessity of conciliating the old lady, said—

"I fancied you were right; although, as I told you, I didn't know the opera. By the way, you must have a remarkably good ear, besides a strong memory, to remember such tunes."

This tickled Miss Marriott, who piqued her-

self upon her musical acquisitions. And, thus conversing, they returned to the house.

Hamilton left soon after; and, before going, took an opportunity to whisper to Eveleen that he would call and see her father on the morrow. Then raising her hand to his lip when Miss Marriott had her back turned, he bade them both farewell, and went home.

CHAPTER V.

QUESTIONABLE COMPANIONSHIP.

THERE stood at the corner of a little street leading out of High Street a small house, upon which was inscribed in large characters "George Hotel." Here were wont to bait the coaches going to or from London; and here were wont to assemble of an evening the young men of the town of Y——, for the purpose of enlivening the tedium of the hours by a game of billiards.

As it was the only house in the place at which a passion of this amusement could be indulged, the room was generally pretty crowded; and when the evening happened to be wet the throng was so very thick as frequently to be productive of much noise, swearing, and confusion. At these crises the master of the hotel, a fat, smiling man in shirtsleeves, would appear at the door, and after making a laborious bow, petition the

inmates of his billiard-room to behave themselves.

On the night of the events detailed in the last chapter, Jem, the "boots" of the "George," who was employed in cleaning some glasses at the bar, asked the billiard-marker, who had descended to refresh by a thin potation the inner-man, what company he had upstairs.

"Two young gents," was the reply.

Whereupon Jem expressed his surprise at the fact, and congratulated his friend upon the prospect of having a light evening's work.

The billiard-marker having nodded back his satisfaction at the probability, ignited a short clay pipe, and slowly remounted the staircase.

What he had said was quite the fact. Only two young men were in the billiard-room, and one of them happened to be no less a person than Mr. Sloman. He was playing with a young man, evidently a stranger to him, who after he made his stroke would rest upon his cue, watching the movements of the deformed person of his antagonist.

It seemed that to this young man there was more amusement to be extracted out of Mr. Sloman's body than from the game.

When they had been thus occupied for some ten minutes the door opened, and a third person entered. Lighting a cigar at a gas-jet that streamed over the marker's head, he took a seat in the corner, and folding his arms upon his breast, appeared to watch intently the game.

Sloman had been so engrossed with his occupation that he had not noticed the entrance of this person; nor was it until some excellent play had elicited a cry of approval that Sloman raised his head, and met the glance of Murray fixed upon him.

They bowed to each other, and Murray exclaimed "Very well played, Mr. Sloman."

To the banker's clerk this was an act of condescension on the part of a client exceedingly gratifying. Sloman smiled his thanks, and continued his game with redoubled zeal.

Presently the marker declared Sloman the victor; and his opponent flinging half-a-crown upon the table, took his hat from a peg and left the room.

"You play a capital game, Mr. Sloman," said Murray, rising from his seat and advancing towards him.

"It's very kind of you to say so, sir," replied Sloman.

"A capital game, indeed. Come, will you have a bout with me?"

They played, and Sloman triumphed. Such was the case three times running.

"What was the rubber?"

"Five shillings, sir, I think you said."

Murray put the money into his hand. Sloman was in high spirits; he had won seven-and-sixpence.

The room was now beginning to fill, and Murray prepared to leave, when suddenly turning he said to Sloman, "I am going to have a glass of brandy-and-water in the coffee-room. Do you feel disposed to join me?"

This was quite overpowering. Sloman humbly bowed his thanks, and followed Murray downstairs.

The coffee-room was empty; and seating themselves at a side table the waiter was summoned, and their wants supplied. Sloman's arms jerked restlessly about, in evident embarrassment. It was plain he was not used to such treatment.

"Well, Mr. Sloman," began Murray, "and how do you like Y——?"

"Oh, very well indeed, sir; it's a capital place."

"And how is your Bank getting on?"

"Middling, sir; we opened two new accounts yesterday."

"Ah, you'll get on well enough by-and-by. By the way, what a nice fellow you have for a manager!"

Murray shaded his eyes by bending his head as he said this, and glanced keenly at Sloman.

There was no reply.

"A fine, jovial, good-looking fellow," continued Murray; "a little too brusque perhaps—too blunt, too plain-spoken," he added, interpreting the word that his companion might the better understand him.

Sloman gave him a hard, searching look; then answered, "Yes, sir; he is as you say, a little blunt."

"I remember once," continued Murray, assuming a careless voice and still closely scrutinising Sloman's features, "when I had occasion to enter your offices, I heard him address one of you two clerks in a manner that, though I couldn't help laughing at the curious terms he used, I thought that he for whom they were

meant must have been greatly indignant. At least I know such would have been my feelings," added he, sipping from his tumbler.

Sloman blushed to the roots of his hair, and bent his head to hide his confusion.

"But," said Murray, still in the same offhand tone, "I suppose such hard words are of frequent occurrence in a bank where there are so many inferiors and so few superiors."

There was a pause. Suddenly Sloman, striking the table heavily with his fist, rose to his feet, and exclaimed in a voice trembling with passion: "Have you brought me here only to insult me?" His face was livid, and his whole frame seemed convulsed with rage. Murray did not appear startled by this sudden display of temper. He answered coolly, "Certainly not."

"If you have," continued Sloman in a voice pitched to the tone of a shriek, "let me tell you it is mean, contemptible, cowardly of you! And he—you heard him! Look!" he cried, seizing his throat between his trembling hands, and compressing it until his eyeballs were visibly protruded from their sockets, "I'll have him like this some of these days—I'll have them all like this who remind me of my curse. A Jew—

let them call me Jew! He'll suffer for it—he does not know me. I'll not forget him! He has called me Jew!"

And, as if the expression choked him, he spat in the air; then turning on his heel marched with his long arms swinging by his side out of the room.

Murray sat motionless for some moments after his departure. Then a slow, peculiar smile overspread his features. He plainly perceived that the deformed carcase of Sloman embodied the spirit of something, for which it is not easy to find another name than fiend. What he had before conjectured he now found confirmed. Perhaps, however, he had not reckoned upon quite so much vehemence. He had an object in goading him thus; but he had no idea that the spur he used lacerated a part so terribly vital. Plainly, he was a little startled at the demon he had himself conjured up. He sat for a long while absorbed in meditation. The hands of the clock pointed to eleven before he rose from his chair. When he did so a faint smile lingered yet upon his lips. He was talking to himself. "If all else fails, this is a tool that will serve me. There was never sent a fitter instrument upon

earth to work a bad deed with." He continued muttering to himself as he left the room, and passed through the corridor of the inn.

On the day following this occurrence Hamilton, with a mind agitated by many conflicting emotions, repaired to the residence of Mr. De Courcy, and inquired if that gentleman had returned from London. The answer was in the affirmative; but Hamilton was struck with the manner in which it was delivered. The servant, a footman, had replied in a rather jaunty and offhand manner; and in the way in which he stood swinging the door to and fro by the handle, and one leg backwards and forwards over the other, he evinced a want of respect that Hamilton remarked at once, and imagined the fellow intoxicated. He made no remark, however; but pushing by requested to see Mr. De Courcy at once.

The servant, instead of showing him into the drawing-room, as he was in the habit of doing, conducted him to a small ante-room, where he informed him Mr. De Courcy would see him.

Hamilton grew anxious. In the behaviour of this footman he plainly enough perceived the

shadow of some coming event. To a mind already agitated the least cause is sufficient to add to its perturbation. Hamilton tried to console himself by picturing Mr. De Courcy as he had hitherto known him to be—jovial and hearty. He conceived him readily granting his permission to the union, and calling Eveleen in to unite their hands. Then he imagined Eveleen's delight; the quiet joy expressed in her lovely eyes; the tender pressure of her hand as he glanced at her with the pride and gladness of a husband.

Such is the human heart—ever hastening to extremes; ignoring that middle course by which the whole conduct of life is regulated; but now suffering its hopes to elevate it to the highest heaven of bliss; and now groaning beneath the oppression of imagined sorrow.

From his pleasing reverie Hamilton was awakened by the entrance of De Courcy. He rose to shake him by the hand; the hearty greeting was wanting; a cold, though not discourteous salute was all Hamilton gained.

They sat down opposite each other, and then there came a short pause. De Courcy fixed an inquiring glance upon Hamilton, and the latter understood that he was expected to begin.

But to go plump to the subject in hand in Mr. De Courcy's present frame of mind, which, if Hamilton could judge by the cloud that darkened his brow, seemed not wholly amiable, would have been ridiculous. Some circumlocutory disquisition was first necessary, to pave the way to the declaration; so Hamilton (poor Hamilton!) said that the weather looked promising!

No sooner was this silly remark uttered than Hamilton cursed himself for having spoken it. He experienced in a moment that contempt for himself common to every mind that has placed itself in a false or absurd light; and so without giving Mr. De Courcy time to reply, he morally braced himself up, and went head-foremost into the subject.

"The motive of this interview," he began, "is to discuss with you, Mr. De Courcy, a question in which is involved the whole of my future career of happiness, or——"

But Mr. De Courcy had stopped him by holding one hand up, and commencing to speak.

"I anticipate what you are about to ask me," he said, firmly; "and to avoid giving you unnecessary pain, let me briefly inform you that it cannot be."

He crossed his legs, and leant back in his chair, dangling the seals of his watch-chain.

Hamilton turned pale; but he remained cool—so cool, that he was surprised at himself.

"I cannot doubt by your reply that you have anticipated the motives of this interview correctly; although, to avoid any error, it may be perhaps necessary for me to proceed in what I was saying."

"It is quite unnecessary. You have come to solicit my daughter Eveleen's hand. My presumption is correct, is it not?"

Hamilton bowed his head.

"When, then, I inform you that I cannot entertain your request—that I could not sanction the union—we shall be both spared the pain of further discussing this unpleasant subject."

Not a muscle of Hamilton's face moved; perfectly collected, he said: "You will pardon me, I am sure, sir, if I make one or two observations. By your explicit rejection of my appeals, I am, unavoidably, led to arrive at one of two conclusions: either that you have been prejudiced against me by some unknown person; or that my present position is such as to render me unworthy of your daughter. The latter I am unwilling to

believe, the uniformity of your courtesy having been a guarantee of your good opinion of me. If my character has been impeached, grant me, sir, an opportunity to rebut my hidden calumniator's accusations."

"Your conclusions are intemperate and hasty," answered De Courcy. "The father who rejects a claimant to his daughter's hand, is surely not compelled to give the reasons for his rejection."

"You are right," said Hamilton; "you are right. You have reason on your side, and I—" his voice slightly faltered as he spoke—"I have only love. But answer me one question: Have you consulted your daughter's affection for me?"

"I cannot answer you, sir."

Hamilton was in despair; once more he came to the attack.

"Am I to quit this house for ever, without knowing the cause of my banishment? Am I to be driven from the presence of the darling of my heart, by a father who refuses to me the justice due to one man from another—the reason of his objections?"

De Courcy was growing angry. He bit his lip, and his body swayed to and fro with an irritable

movement. Hamilton foresaw an explosion, and desired it. "I can only then suppose my first supposition to be correct—that I have been calumniated, and that you are willing to believe what you will not suffer me to deny."

"Since you *will* have my reasons," cried De Courcy, rising from his chair, and addressing Hamilton with great violence of manner, "you shall! Of your character, sir, I know nothing—I wish to know nothing—I care to know nothing. Of your position, I know that you are a mere banker's clerk—a struggling man, too poor to think of marriage, unless combined with money! My daughter will have money, and this, sir, you may probably have guessed. I am an old man, and I know that there are such things as adventurers in the world—men who recommend themselves by good looks and polite manners to foolish girls, who know not the lot they espouse until the die is irrevocably cast. Love! it is a cant term for knavery—for treachery—for men, under the mask of society, to insinuate themselves into the households of parents, and into the affections of daughters, to betray——"

He would have continued—angry old men are apt at such converse—but meeting the flashing

eye of Hamilton, white, trembling, enraged as he was, he suddenly came to a full pause, and then turning to his chair, muttered in a broken voice, "You have my reasons, sir!"

There was something in the attitude of Hamilton at that moment superb. His fine form was erected to its full height; one hand was laid upon his heart, the other sought a support on the back of a chair by his side. A haughty sneer sat upon his lip, and his cheeks were stained with the blush of a mortally wounded dignity—that dignity which it is the prerogative of innocence alone to assume, and which, when seen, stamps the spirit that imparts it as noble and lofty.

But the full force of his emotions was expressed in his eyes. De Courcy had met, and quailed beneath their lightning glance, and now, in his arm-chair, sat whispering to himself like an ancient driveller, one moment muttering an apology, the next articulating, with a cowed defiance, "You have my reasons, sir."

In life a good man is always the unconscious actor of a noble part. Vainly does the stage mimic the pathos of his silence, the eloquence of his least gesture, the grandeur of his transient smile. Such a noble part was Hamilton now

playing. Glancing at De Courcy, whose averted eyes sought the ground, with a look of most withering disdain, he took his hat from the table, and opening the door, passed out in silence.

A single word would have marred the sublimity of this exit. De Courcy might have felt his superiority; for, as the door closed, he touched the bell, that the servant might attend his departure.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ARRANGEMENT.

It was not until the gate of the garden was closed behind him that the strong excitement under which Hamilton laboured, and which had been his support during the foregoing scene, gave way. His pride, his anger vanished before reflection: one gaunt, horrid fact took possession of his thoughts—Eveleen had been refused him; his suit had been rejected; henceforth, he was alone.

Almost prostrated by this fierce reaction of feeling, he glanced around him, and seeing nobody nigh, sank beside a tree near the De Courcys' wall, and remained thus for awhile motionless, his face buried in his hands.

His mind was a whirlpool of conflicting emotions. Rage at the insults that had been heaped upon him; despair at the apparent hopelessness of his love; and worse—that dull aching

pain which the fond heart feels when its brightest hope, its loveliest dream, its most sacred joy, is suddenly snatched from it, confused his brain, and rendered his life aimless and dark. The present had nothing to offer, the future had nothing to promise.

Thus he sat, his hands tightly encircling his temples, and his whole mind intensely occupied with the contemplation of its own suffering.

Suddenly, a light hand was laid upon his shoulder, and glancing hastily up, he perceived Eveleen by his side.

A sweet, sad smile was upon her mouth; and in her eyes there shone an expression of resolution that inspired Hamilton with a momentary gleam of hope, though he knew not why.

"I know all," she said, laying her hand upon his arm. "But we must not remain here. Follow me when you see me wave my handkerchief." And keeping close to the wall, she walked quickly off in the opposite direction to the town.

Hamilton kept his eyes fixed upon her until she stopped, and turning, signalled as she had said. In a few moments he had joined her.

"Papa," she said, hastily, "thinks I have gone

into the town to make some purchases. I saw you leave the house, and I started at once to follow. But we cannot talk even here. The position is too exposed. Look! there we shall be safe!" and she pointed to a small though thick wood that shadowed the landscape half a mile onward.

In silence they pressed forward, and in a short time found themselves concealed within the friendly shade of the trees.

"Alone, and with you!" exclaimed Hamilton, seizing Eveleen's hand, and pressing it to his lips. "This, indeed, repays me for all I have endured."

"I anticipated the result of your meeting," said Eveleen; "but tell me, how did my father behave to you?"

In a few minutes he had communicated to her the exact story. She fully reciprocated her lover's indignation. Her cheeks mantled with a burning blush, and her eyes were suffused with tears.

"It was cruel, cruel of him," she murmured. "And you have suffered all this for me!"

"Ay, and would suffer, with patience, fifty times the sorrow and the wrong for one glance of my darling's eyes."

She pressed the hand that clasped hers, and looking up, she exclaimed, "And I, too, have had my little battle to fight to-day."

"With your father?"

"Yes. This morning at breakfast I perceived, by the expression of his face, that something was shortly about to occur. But I remained quiet, and presently went into the library to fetch a book. He followed me, and having closed the door, told me, with a dreadfully serious air, that he wished to have a short conversation with me. We seated ourselves, and then he began. The first thing he asked me was whether I cared at all for you." Eveleen paused, and glanced timidly from the corner of her eyes at Hamilton.

"And you answered——?"

"I answered, that I could not reply to the question, without some consideration. For by his manner I perceived at once that it would be rash to avow the truth. Then he grew in a rage, and said that I must have nothing to do with you: that he had secured a husband for me, who was as devoted as ever I could expect any man to be: and concluded by naming to me the odious word Murray."

"Murray!"

"Yes. You must have observed his marked partiality for me, and the indifference with which I regarded him. Perhaps we owe all this trouble to him," she added thoughtfully.

"Somebody I am sure has been vilifying me behind my back to your father. This sudden change in his conduct towards us both is too strange to be natural. If I thought it was Murray——"

His brow grew dark, and he clenched his hand as he added—

"He has always given me the impression of a man fully capable of devising and executing some treacherous scheme."

"I have never liked him," said Eveleen; "and his attentions have always been to me a system of persecution. What could make papa wish me to have such a man! He never before mentioned his name to me in connection with marriage. Marriage! oh, I could never, never marry him!"

"Nor shall you. At least not whilst I am suffered to retain life and strength."

"But what can I do if papa insists upon it? What can I, a weak girl, do against two men—

one of whom, my father, I know to be capable of any extreme when his passion is aroused, however he may afterwards regret it?"

Hamilton remained silent, his eyes fixed on the ground. Suddenly he turned—and, clasping her hand, exclaimed:

"Eveleen, do you love me?—love me, my darling, I mean, enough to unite your lot to mine—to become my wife? We cannot be separated then. We may be poor—but shall we not have a treasure in each other's love? And let the world grow dark, our hearts shall be as a sunlight to each other, to lighten and to gladden our one path through life."

There was a short pause: and, letting fall her hand, he drew himself erect, and extended his arms towards her. A moment she glanced at him, and a faint blush overspread her features; the next, her head was upon his breast, and she was reclining in the strong shelter of his embrace.

A fortnight after this, De Courcy was called away to London on business. Before he left, he told his daughter he should be absent two days—perhaps more. At least, she was not to be alarmed if he did not return sooner. At the gate

he privately gave instructions to the servant not on any consideration to suffer Mr. Hamilton to enter the house. He walked to the coach, upon which was seated Murray, and they went off together.

That same afternoon a letter came from a Miss Godstone, an aunt of Eveleen, asking her to spend a day or two at her house near Henley. This letter, addressed in a lady's handwriting, was written by Hamilton.

Eveleen hastened to communicate the fact to the governess; and, showing her the letter, informed her that she intended starting the next morning. To this Miss Marriott replied, that she would be acting wisely, as she would find the house dull without her father.

So the next morning Eveleen and a small portmanteau were escorted to a coach that touched at Henley, by Miss Marriott and a footman. The governess, having seen the young lady safely stowed away inside, kissed her hand to her, and walked home.

When the coach had left Y—— some mile and a half behind, it came up with a pedestrian, a tall, good-looking young fellow, who hailed it, and jumped inside. This was Hamilton.

As if surprised at encountering Eveleen, he shook hands with her very politely before their fellow-travellers, and asked her to what part of the country she was going. She answered, to L——. He expressed himself surprised at this, as, strange to say, he was also going there. He trusted she would suffer him the pleasure of being her escort. She replied that she would be glad of his society. Then ensued some small talk. And the passengers one by one closed their eyes, and opened their mouths, and slept or snored.

Before twelve o'clock that morning had finished reverberating on the air from the Church of St. John at L——, the registry-book kept in the vestry of that edifice had added to it these signatures:

"FRANK HAMILTON.
EVELEEN MARION DE COURCY,"

and at noon on the following day, Eveleen had returned to the home of her father, apparently in high spirits after her visit to Aunt Godstone. At least so thought Miss Marriott.

Thus briefly have been summed up these particulars, which of themselves could be easily

amplified into another three volumes. But matters of greater moment call us on; romance must give way to fact. This momentary gleam of sunshine only renders more black the coming gloom.

CHAPTER VII.

A THWARTED LOVE.

EVELEEN had a curious and difficult part to play. To her, deceit had been odious: now she acted the character of a deceiver, day after day, unarraigned by conscience. Love had shaded in its outspread wings all other feelings. She lived for her husband alone; her father was become her persecutor, her tormentor; she saw in every action, she perceived in every word, the influence of the nightmare of her slumbers, the aversion of her waking thoughts—Murray. The parent had compelled his own renunciation. In his stead another was enshrined in her heart, concentrating in himself the love that was ebbing from all things else.

But her part was difficult to perform. To be secret was the only art she had to practise to carry on her dissimulation. But to a woman what can be harder than to conceal her love?

Moreover, she was perplexed by the assiduous attention of Murray. This man seemed indifferent alike to her smiles and frowns. He loved her, and he was determined to make her love him. Often, to put an end for ever to his sickening gallantry, she longed to tell him that she was married. But the image of her husband, cautioning her to silence by the forefinger on his mouth, restrained her desire, and she endured with patience the sugar and water of her lover's conversation.

She did not often see Hamilton. It was dangerous to enter the Bank: for she knew Sloman to be acquainted with Murray, and dreaded the lynx-eyes of the hunchback. Once, when walking with her father, she met Hamilton in the street. Fortunately her veil concealed the sudden pallor of her face. Hamilton stalked gravely by with the faintest glance of recognition. When he had passed, her father said to her,—

"Eveleen, your conduct pleases me. I am glad to see your unconcern at the presence of a man who somehow or other managed to ingratiate himself into your good opinion. This shows mastery over your disposition, and I am greatly gratified at it. Compared to Murray, Mr. Hamil-

ton is but the maid compared to the mistress. True he had something of the gentleman about him: but then his position—pugh! not worth *that!*" The old gentleman snapped his fingers and took snuff.

This of Eveleen's husband!

Mr. De Courcy knew his arguments to be absurd, his sentiments to be contradictory, and, moreover, felt the assumption of his new character to be sometimes painful. But the influence of Murray was upon him, and like a weaker substance long incorporated with a stronger, De Courcy, by being associated with Murray, gradually partook of something of his nature.

One day Eveleen went by herself for a stroll in the garden, and on passing a small gate leading into a meadow, through which there ran a public footpath, she observed a short boy making signs to her. He was too small to excite alarm; but, conceiving him to be a beggar, she put her hand into her pocket to feel for money. Observing, however, that the boy held something in his hand, she approached closer, and saw that it was a letter.

"Be you Miss Evellin?" asked the urchin.

"Yes," answered Eveleen.

"Mister Hamilton said I was to give you this, but he told me I warn't to take no money."

Eveleen, however, took the hint as well as the letter; and dropping a coin into the lad's hand, she hastened away to peruse the precious epistle.

It was a long letter, full of love, of devotion, of hopes for the future, of schemes for the present, &c., interesting to none but the recipient. She, however, gloated over it, and became so absorbed as to be quite unconscious of the sounding footsteps of some one approaching her from behind. A slight cough caused her to look round, and she perceived Murray standing by her side.

With a trembling hand she hastily crumpled up the letter and thrust it into her pocket.

Murray appeared not to notice the action, but with a smile said that he was glad to find her alone, as he wanted to have a few minutes conversation with her, if she would permit him.

As she could not now possibly avoid it, she bowed her head in token of acquiescence, and he commenced: but it would weary you to detail what he said. In a word, it was a declaration of fervent love, and an earnest petition that she would not reject his suit.

This was the first time he had openly avowed his passion; and terribly painful was the position of Eveleen.

"Mr. Murray," she replied firmly, "it would be false for me to say that I have ever entertained for you any other feeling than friendship. This I trusted you would have perceived in my conduct towards you, without aggravating by speech what it is painful enough to feel in silence."

For this curt rebuff, after his eloquent avowal, matured long before it was uttered, he was evidently unprepared. His cheek instantly flushed with the passion that he fought hard to stifle, and he remained for a moment silent. At last he said,—

"You cannot be aware, Miss De Courcy, of the depth and truthfulness of the love with which you have inspired me, or you would betray less contempt and more leniency towards your victim. Pity, if no tenderer emotion, would possess your heart, could you but read the thoughts whose secret is grief at your long disdain."

There was no reply.

"It cannot, surely," he continued, assuming his most melting tone, "be a crime to love. And yet what conclusion can I arrive at if I

construe my love by its effect upon the object of its devotion? Am I so utterly devoid of all that can claim woman's sympathy, that I cannot even win from you one smile to accept as an omen of my future happiness? I have loved you long and tenderly: I have worshipped your very footsteps with a devotion almost idolatrous; those sentiments that are known to, and sanctioned by, your father, each look, each sigh, each gesture of mine has long since interpreted. What then obstructs my passion? to what must I attribute your ceaseless coldness? Will you deign me an answer?"

Eveleen violently trembled. Oh! how she longed to speak the one beloved word, "Hamilton"—that word which, like a sun, would for ever scatter the fogs that seemed almost strangling her. But fear restrained her tongue. She dreaded, with a woman's prophetic horror, the effect of Murray's enmity to her husband. She must yet wait before the sweet yet saddened truth could be revealed. Yet now, perhaps, one firm rejection might for ever annihilate Murray's hopes, and ease her of this unendurable incubus.

"Mr. Murray," she said, "you have had my answer once—would you have me repeat it?

Has it not been testified to you in my conduct ever since we have known each other? It is unmanly, sir, to persecute me in this manner. My father, in favouring you, leaves me utterly alone. I have no friend to whom I may appeal in this extremity, and yet you continue to supplicate me for what I cannot impart! yet, and in spite of my friendless position! Mr. Murray, accept this as my final answer: if we cannot henceforth meet as friends only, we must meet no more." And, with a dignified mien, she turned and slowly walked away.

But Murray had darted after her, and seized her by the arm.

"Stay!" he cried.

Her face grew crimson as with a flashing eye she demanded to know the meaning of his insolence.

"Listen!" he replied. "You have rejected my suit, and you thought I knew not why! you have spurned my love, and you deemed me ignorant of the cause! What! did you think your old lover Murray so blind? Did you think he saw not your little, trusting heart ensnared by the smiles and manners of a successful rival? Nay, do not struggle," he exclaimed, as Eveleen

endeavoured to release herself from his grasp; "you shall hear me out now: you shall hear that I know and have watched with scorn the interchange of all those little friendly civilities between you and that fellow, Hamilton. But in spite of him I'll have you! In spite of him I'll crush his heart by wedding you before him! What, a banker's clerk against William Murray! Look! this kiss shall declare my promise, as the priest and the prayer-book shall help to confirm it!"

He stooped and endeavoured to kiss her, but she, violently struggling, screamed and averted her face. Terror and passion alike united to render her for awhile proof against his intention. But she found herself growing weak; already his arm had succeeded in encircling her waist when, ere the cry that broke from her lips had ceased to echo, an unseen hand dealt Murray a violent blow between the eyes, and in a moment he was on his back, his face and shirt-collar stained with the blood that flowed copiously from his nose.

Eveleen turned joyfully towards her deliverer, and beheld Hamilton standing before her. In a moment she was safe in his arms.

Kissing her on the brow, he bore her to a bench a little way off, and telling her that he would rejoin her in a moment, walked towards Murray. That gentleman had risen from his thorny bed—he had fallen into a gooseberry bush—and presented such a dismal spectacle that Hamilton, in spite of his rage, uttered an involuntary laugh. Each side of his cheek was smeared with blood, as were also his collar and a light cravat, of which the bow by his tumble had been twisted beneath his ear. His hat was off, and his left hand was employed in tremblingly rubbing a portion of his person which had unquestionably been wounded by the vengeful thorns.

He glanced at Hamilton and receded a step, as the latter approached him, and demanded from him an explanation of this outrage.

"Who are you?" sputtered Murray, choking with wrath.

"Surely you ought to know me by this time!" was the composed reply. "If any further introduction be necessary it shall be with a horsewhip."

Murray clenched his fist and bade him come on.

Hamilton went on; but instead of awaiting

him, Murray retired two or three paces, and then stood still muttering that they should meet again.

"We shall," returned Hamilton; "and the next time I hope by a duckpond, that you may meet with a more deserving fate."

"We shall meet again!" hissed Murray, once more.

Hamilton shrugged his shoulders. He longed for a cane or club that he might well belabour the despicable fellow that stood trembling, frowning, and swearing before him. But he had had enough revenge in making him cut such a ridiculous figure before Eveleen; so he merely said in a tone of great contempt: "Go! and if ever I catch you making love to Miss De Courcy again, trust me, I will render the conclusion no less unprofitable than this has been."

But whether Murray had heard this or not cannot be known; as he had already anticipated the command, and was slinking rapidly away. On reaching the house, he told the servant he had met with a severe fall, and requested to be shown to a room. Here he washed his face, and arranged his garments, amidst many burning vows of revenge. Half way down the road he

encountered Mr. De Courcy returning to his home. He revolved in his mind the advisability of his anticipating Eveleen's complaint. But knowing his influence over his friend, and the perturbation of his mind being such as to render coherence to him almost impossible, he contented himself with waving his hand as they passed, and crying that he could not stop as a business-message had unexpectedly called him away, but that he would visit him in the evening. The unsuspecting De Courcy passed on with a smile and a nod, and Murray speeded to his house, a little better than half a mile distant.

In the meanwhile Hamilton had taken a seat by the side of Eveleen, and was relating how it happened that he came so unexpectedly on the scene as her deliverer.

"You know," he said, "that I had not heard from you for two days. I became anxious, and at half-past eleven o'clock this morning wrote you a letter——"

"Which I received," interrupted Eveleen.

"Ah, I wasn't sure. Well, I wrote you a letter, which I gave to a small boy to carry to you, and to wait until he saw you that he might deliver it into your hands. I knew the boy

before, and knew him also to be very sharp and intelligent: the very urchin, I thought, to be Cupid's postman. I told him to hang about that meadow by the gate, where I knew, darling, you were in the habit of walking. After he had delivered it to you he was to return, and then I was to give him a shilling. Well, I waited, one, two, two hours and a half, and no boy. Growing anxious I left the Bank in the charge of Mr. Sloman, and sallied forth to seek him myself. I entered the meadow and still no boy. I then thought he might have been foolish enough to enter the garden, and so I approached the gate and peered in. As I did so, I heard the sounds of voices—yours, and that villain Murray's. What more shall I say? I listened to his protestations, and heard your replies. Then I beheld what I think I pretty successfully helped to mar. Ha! ha! *he*'ll never forget me!"

But Eveleen wore a sad and frightened look.

"I would have given anything had this not occurred," she said.

"Why, my own?"

"Because you have made him an enemy: and I am sure he's capable of doing anything in hate."

"What can he do? He dare not shoot at me from behind a hedge, for he is frightened of the law. He dare not shoot at me before my face, for he is frightened of my pistol. What can he do? Separate us! No! There is a spell in a certain registry-book that binds us together for ever, and that defies the whole world to break, though it should be composed entirely of Murrays. Fear not, love. He is a coward, and his power extends no further than to the end of his tongue."

Eveleen answered with a mournful smile. Could she have had any presentiment of the coming evil?

"How long," she asked, "is our secret to remain undisclosed?"

"Until you wish it revealed."

"If Murray could be got rid of, my father might perhaps relent. Then what happiness would be ours!"

"I do not imagine you will be troubled by him much longer. Love has dosed him to-day with a physic that may perhaps rid him of his disorder. And, moreover, he only cares for your father for your sake—you may be sure of that. Men of his age do not make companions, at least, constant companions, of the old. When,

therefore, he has sufficiently discovered your obduracy to be lasting, you will find his society become less frequent, until it quite vanishes."

Eveleen raised her eyes to heaven with a devout look. "And now, darling," she said, "we must part. My father may have returned; therefore you had better stay here until I have entered the house and occupied his attention for awhile. He would recognise your walk, and if he should see you crossing the meadow—oh! it would be dreadful."

They parted: after many mutual vows of everlasting love; of speedy communication when communication was possible; after a few sighs and smiles from Hamilton, and many tears from Eveleen, and one long, long, warm embrace.

It might have been thought that after having played so very conspicuous a part in the above-detailed scene, Murray would not very willingly have shown his face again to Eveleen. But the qualities of the heart are to be reckoned not by the capability, but by the performance. When evening came, Murray came with it; and the first person he saw was Eveleen, who, unconscious of his proposed visit, sat in the drawing-room working at some embroidery.

She rose to leave the room as he entered, but he remained in the doorway, so that she could not pass without touching him.

"Miss De Courcy," he exclaimed, "pray do not mistake this act for rudeness. I only wish, now that we are alone, to come to an understanding with you upon a subject of interest to us both."

Eveleen paused, and glanced at him to see the expression of his face. She thought for a moment that he was going to pronounce his own verdict, —that he was going to emancipate her for ever from the servitude of his society.

"Permit me to ask you one question; have you spoken to your father upon the subject of this morning's occurrence?"

"No."

This was strange; yet he seemed to have expected it. He knew very well that the De Courcy of the present was not the De Courcy of the past. He knew that he had so completely won him over to his own views, that the generous thinker was forgotten in the speculator: that the father was forgotten in the rigid dictator. He knew that to this De Courcy Eveleen dared not breathe a syllable of her encounter with Hamil-

ton, nor of her insult from Murray. For of the first communication she dreaded the result; and of the second, knew that her father would doubt it, or believing, render it plausible, and argue the insult into honourable lovefare.

All this Eveleen knew too; and this knowledge had held her silent. Hence to Murray's question she had answered, "No."

"Then," he said, "before I can say another word, I must first offer you my humblest and sincerest apology for the unfortunate event into which emotions, of which I will not venture to give you the name, hurried me this morning. May I flatter myself with the hope that it will be accepted?"

Eveleen distrusted this man; intuitively she felt, had always felt, that he was a hypocrite. Yet to his apparent earnestness now, what reply could she make? Her head drooped upon her breast, and this Murray took for a sign of acquiescence. He bowed courteously to her for her consideration, and thanked her.

"And now," he continued, "having gained your forgiveness, I may venture to proceed with more confidence. Whatever sentiments of anger may have been aroused in me this morning by

Hamilton, a calm review of his conduct compels from me the liveliest admiration for the promptitude he displayed in rescuing you from what he deemed, and I regret to add, perhaps with justice, a great outrage." He noticed how brilliant Eveleen's eyes became at these words, and how from their quiet depths seemed to sparkle forth her thanks. "He had justice on his side," he went on, "and he was right to exercise it as he did. However, I will not dwell upon an affair so painful to us all. My only object in reverting to it now is to assure you that with me it shall be hurried into oblivion: that not a word of it shall be mentioned to your father; and that if ever the subject should be brought to mind, it will recall no more painful recollection than the conduct of one whom, though I can know him no more as a friend, I shall ever honour as a brave and upright man."

Murray hardly needed the smile that sweetly lighted up Eveleen's features, to remark the impression that this speech had made upon her. The candour with which it was expressed, the frankness of his bearing, the evident regret with which he contemplated the event of the morning, all conspired to render him more amiable in her

eyes. She dismissed the painful subject from her mind, and when her father entered the room, he was gratified to find them conversing together, evidently in the most amicable manner.

CHAPTER VIII.

SLOMAN AGAIN.

A WEEK had elapsed since Murray had received the blow on the nose that felled him into the gooseberry-bush; and the day was Thursday, the second of March, eighteen hundred and thirty * * * *

It had rained hard during the morning, and the mud from the preceding day's cattle-market lay thick in High Street, besmearing the pavement and rendering the roadway impassable to all save the iron-bound boot of the country clod, or the horny gaiters of the thin-legged farmer. The street was deserted. Now and then a cart or a private vehicle would pass in a shower of mud raised by the hoofs of the slipping horses; or from out the shop-doors might be seen popping the occasional heads of their owners, observing with curious eye the signs of the weather, or shaking with a melancholy movement at the de-

solate spectacle presented to them by High Street.

In the Y—— Bank business seemed suspended. Sloman sat on his high stool, biting the end of his pen, with his gaze apparently fixed on the columns of a newspaper that lay open before him; though ever and anon his eyes would steal a glance at the door of the manager's room, which remained closed; or at the form of his fellow clerk, whose head, resting upon his arm, sometimes bobbed against his chest, and as instantly started up again, with eyes bloodshot by the slumber from which he had caught a momentary oblivion.

No business had been transacted that morning. No cheques had been cashed, no monies deposited; and Hamilton, who had been engaged in reading a book recommended to him by Eveleen, at last grew impatient, and issued from his little room with his hat on his head, evidently with a view of going out. As he passed Mr. Sloman's desk, that gentleman stole a furtive glance at him, and a faint smile wrinkled his mouth, which as instantly disappeared.

Hamilton went to the door of the bank and looked out. Mr. Sloman raised his eyes again,

and followed his movements apparently with some degree of curiosity. A shade of disappointment crossed his features as Hamilton, shaking his head, re-entered the bank, and stood in the centre of the floor, meditating, it seemed.

"A disagreeable day," he said to Sloman.

"Very, sir," was the reply.

"I want to see a man on business living about a mile away, but the state of the roads looks so unpromising, I don't like to attempt it."

"I don't think you will find it very dirty, sir, when you have cleared High Street," said Sloman.

"You think not? By the way, now that I think of it, just turn to Mr. Murray's account and see what balance he has with us."

Sloman, after turning over the pages of a large ledger, replied, "Three hundred and ten pounds, fourteen and seven-pence."

"That is his running account?"

"Yes."

"And his deposit?"

"Five hundred pounds."

"Did you debit him with his cheque-book, last week?"

"No, sir, he didn't take a cheque-book, he

said they would be too many, so I tore him out five, which I have entered."

"All right. And what's Williams' account?"

Sloman answered.

"And Jenkyns's?"

Sloman again answered.

"Come, that looks well. We shall prosper yet, Mr. Sloman. We only want time, eh?"

"Only time, sir."

"Well, I think I shall make a start. I leave you in charge of the bank. Should anybody call let me know." And so saying Hamilton went away. When he had gone, Sloman began to whistle a tune, then turning to his fellow clerk, he exclaimed, "Gamyn, there's no business doing to-day; I am going into the manager's room for a bit to look after the fire and read his papers. Call me if anything's wanted; and mind, don't go to sleep!"

Gamyn drowsily nodded back a reply, and Sloman gently went along the floor into the manager's room, and half closed the door behind him.

Hamilton lived at the bank; the upper part of the house belonged to him. There were five rooms, of which he occupied two, and a single

servant that the establishment allowed to him, one. Two rooms he considered to be enough for him, the others being left as spare rooms for such of his friends as might visit him. The front room, overlooking the street, he had converted into his sitting-room, the back into his bedroom.

Hamilton did not permit his clerks to enter the little room leading out of the bank in his absence, much less would he have suffered their intrusion into the upper part of his residence. Sloman, however, evidently did not mind these rules, which, though they had never been spoken, were very well understood; for he entered the manager's room quietly, though with apparent nonchalance, and after taking a peep at Gamyn, half closed the door behind him.

Once in, the motive that had called him there began to operate. Advancing on tip-toe to a door that opened into the adjoining passage, he paused for a moment, and listened. The sound of a woman's voice, humming to herself, came up from below: it was the servant in the kitchen. The air was monotonous, the singer stopping once only, and with a jerk, then instantly resuming. Sloman knew that it was the song of a

woman sewing, who only interrupted the strain to bite her thread.

He seemed satisfied, and lightly stole back again, and took another peep at Gamyn. The youth had shifted his position; instead of his head resting upon his hand it reposed upon his arm, which was extended across the desk. Gamyn was evidently asleep.

Satisfied with this inspection, Sloman sat down and commenced drawing off his boots. In doing so one fell with some noise on the uncarpeted floor. He ceased all movement, and held his breath as he listened. The sounds of the woman's low singing down stairs continued, and a glance at Gamyn assured Sloman that he still slumbered. Then quick as lightning he passed through the doorway, along the passage, and ran lightly up-stairs. On the landing he listened again, and, apparently contented, pushed the sitting-room door open, and passed on into Hamilton's bed-chamber.

It was a small room, with an iron bedstead projecting half way into the interior, enveloped in white curtains. A portmanteau lay beneath the dressing-table, and on the mantelpiece there reposed a letter. Sloman took it up, and saw

that it was addressed in a woman's hand-writing. He then opened it, and found it began thus:—"My own darling Frank;" and it was signed "Eveleen." He had evidently no time to read it; otherwise this had been done. He replaced it carefully in its former position, and then advanced towards the portmanteau. Drawing it tenderly forth, he raised the cover, and found in it a number of letters and a dressing-case. He extracted the dressing-case, and placed it noiselessly upon the table. In doing so he fancied he heard a noise without. Gliding to the sitting-room door, he glanced cautiously around it down the passage. All was still, and after a few moments' listening, he returned to the dressing-case. He tried it, and found it unlocked. This seemed to please him, for a smile overspread his features, and a slight noise like a chuckle escaped his lips.

The box had a false lid, which he lifted out by means of two little silver rings attached to each end. Beneath he found more letters, and from one of the envelopes he observed that there escaped the ends of some hair of a light golden colour. All these letters were directed in a female's handwriting, to Frank Hamilton, Esq.

Putting his hand in the side pocket of his coat, he drew from it a thin roll of papers held together by an elastic band. Slipping this, the bundle opened, and revealed itself as containing four cheques, signed, but unfilled, and some half dozen Bank of England notes—apparently a large sum. Sloman's hand slightly trembled now, but the smile still lurked in his mouth. He selected three of the letters that lay before him, and into the first slipped three bank notes, into the second three more, and into the third the signed cheques. Then he emptied the dressing-case, placed these letters carefully at the bottom, covered them up with the rest of the papers, re-inserted the false lid, and deposited the dressing-case in the portmanteau, which he pushed back under the table. Then noiselessly descending the staircase, he drew on his boots, and entered the bank, slightly whistling, as was his custom when the manager was absent.

These proceedings had occupied him exactly ten minutes.

Gamyn was sound asleep upon his desk, the street was still deserted, indeed it had commenced to rain afresh. It was almost dark, and the hands of the clock pointed to three minutes to four.

At four o'clock the bank was usually closed. Sloman went over to Gamyn and roused him.

"Come," he said, "wake up! It's four o'clock; let's strike a balance and be off."

Striking a balance means to cast up the accounts, and see if they agree with the cash that is in the till or safe. This duty was generally the manager's; but in his absence it devolved upon the head cashier; so on this evening Sloman and Gamyn "struck the balance" between them.

The latter took the ledger and reckoned up the figures of the day's work that it contained. As there had been no business, there were no figures, and the amount, therefore, remained the same as on the preceding evening.

There was a certain sum of money kept in the strong room down-stairs. It consisted of bags of silver and gold, and sometimes bank notes were placed there. They afforded resources for the bank in the event of a "run," and if it fell short of a certain amount, the head office in London supplied it with more. Sometimes, on the Wednesday, which was market-day, more cash than was necessary came in, and then the surplus was sent to London. A sufficient sum to meet the

exigences of the day was always kept in the till, and when this sum, added to the bulk of the cash deposited below, was found to agree with the figures in the ledger, the day's work was known to be correct.

The key of the safe-room was always held by Hamilton. When more money was wanted, he would give it to Sloman, who would proceed with it down-stairs, unlock the door, bring up what was necessary, and restore it to the manager.

When the bank had opened that morning at nine o'clock, the weather seemed promising, and Hamilton had given the strong-room key to Sloman, that the till might be replenished, for he anticipated business. Sloman had, therefore, brought from the strong-room a bag of gold, two bags of silver, and notes to the amount of three hundred pounds. No money had either been received or issued during the day, and, of course, the evening balance would prove similar to that of yesterday, and therefore correct. Nevertheless, Sloman said to Gamyn that it would be right to count it, and accordingly proceeded to do so.

"What's the figure in the ledger?" he asked of Gamyn, who stood by his side.

Gamyn referred to the book, and replied, "£2,009 16*s.* 10*d.*"

"All right. Just see what there was in the strong room last night."

Gamyn went into the manager's room, and took a slip of paper out of a small box on the mantelpiece, in which were placed every evening the balance of the preceding day's work.

"Notes, seven hundred; gold, four hundred; silver, five hundred and forty; total, sixteen hundred and forty," said Gamyn.

"£1,640," said Sloman, jotting it down. Then he proceeded to count the money he had in the till, which, with the notes, amounted to £369 16*s.* 10*d.* This he added to £1,640, and found the result £2,009 16*s.* 10*d.*

"That's right, isn't it?" asked Sloman.

"Yes," replied Gamyn.

"Now, you're quite sure?"

Gamyn again referred to the ledger, and answered, "Quite sure."

Sweeping the money back into the till, Sloman locked it, and gave Gamyn the key, bidding him lay it upon the table in the manager's room. Then, putting on his overcoat, he prepared to depart. Half way down the street he encoun-

tered Hamilton returning. He nodded pleasantly to Sloman, and as he passed him, cried, "Have you locked up the bank?"

"Yes, sir."

"Money all right?"

"All right, sir."

Then they each went on their way.

But instead of going to his lodgings, which were in a narrow street out of the main thoroughfare, Sloman pursued his way along the road leading to where De Courcy lived. About a walk of three minutes to the top of High Street, a lane branched suddenly off to the left, and this he took.

It was now quite dark. The wind was high, and howled dismally through the hedges and the trees, driving before it fitful showers of rain, and sometimes small twigs with rotten leaves upon them, the mouldering relics of a vanished summer. Above, all was black, and below, all was mud. But neither of these facts seemed much to trouble Sloman, who, with slouched hat, and coat buttoned up to the neck, splashed onwards talking to himself, and sometimes uttering a low and guttural laugh.

Half way down this lane he perceived a light

approaching him, and presently a carriage passed him with two horses which spattered the mud in his face. Soon after he saw another light, this time stationary. Towards it he now hastily advanced, and in a short while found himself in front of a small house that stood in a garden environed with a railing.

Opening the gate, he proceeded up the path which, being white, he pursued without difficulty to the door, and there gave a loud and prolonged summons. It was opened by a female servant, who glared suspiciously at him from beneath a candle which she held over her head.

"Is Mr. Murray in?" asked Sloman, pushing by her, and getting into the hall.

"Are you Mr. Sloman?" said the servant.

"Yes."

"All right, sir. Will you follow me, please?" And the servant conducted him down the passage into a small room situated at the end, and desired him to wait, as Mr. Murray would soon be down. A lamp stood upon the table, and upon the mantelpiece were pipes and tobacco jars, an empty soda-water bottle, and a tumbler. There were a few books ranged upon a cabinet in one corner, and a skull cut down and highly polished,

with a Greek inscription upon it. This seemed to be used as a drinking-cup.

After a lapse of five minutes, Murray entered. He was clad in a dressing-gown, and his head was enveloped in a huge smoking-cap, like a turban. The moment his eyes encountered the form of Sloman, he started back with an ejaculation of fear.

"Good heaven!" he cried. "Who are you?"

"Don't you know me?" answered Sloman.

"It's Sloman's voice, and" he added, inaudibly, "it's Sloman's shape. But look at yourself in the glass, man!"

Sloman did so, and beheld a face freckled all over with mud. He seemed conscious of the hideous spectacle it presented, for he said, half apologetically, "It was that cursed carriage that did it."

"It was my friend De Courcy's, I suppose."

"Eveleen's father, eh?"

Murray nodded, with rather a look of disgust; perhaps at so fair a name being in so foul a mouth. "But," said he, "come and wash your face; then you'll be better able to commence business." And, so saying, he led the way into a lavatory, whence Sloman soon after emerged,

slightly improved in cleanliness, though it wanted something more than water to improve his face.

"You smoke, don't you?" said Murray, as, closing the door, he seated himself at the table opposite Sloman.

The hunchback nodded. Murray pushed a tobacco jar before him, and in silence watched him fill his pipe and light it. "And I drink too," said Sloman.

Murray opened a cupboard, from which he extracted a glass, a bottle of brandy, and some soda water, and placed them on the table. "Is that to your liking?"

Sloman nodded with an air of satisfaction. There seemed a slight shrinking, a lurking horror in Murray, when he addresed his companion. Moreover, his ugliness seemed to exercise a kind of fascination over him, for he hardly ever took his eyes from the face before him. Ugly as Sloman always was, his late combat with the elements had rendered him downright hideous. His hair, clogged and heavy with the wet, hung matted upon his low forehead, and his cheeks, as if saturated by the rain, looked moist, yellow, and sickly. His peaked nose had been emblazoned

at the end by the cold and the wind, and his very hump appeared swollen beneath the coat that wrinkled on his back and shoulders. He seemed perfectly at home with Murray, opening his coat, thrusting his mud-covered boots into the fireplace, and blowing a cloud of smoke into his companion's face with all the ease and coolness of an equal or a superior.

"Well," said Murray, "and what news have you got to tell me?"

"The thing's done," said Sloman.

"My cheques and all?"

"Yes, all: safe in his dressing-case: amidst a heap of letters from Eveleen."

"Ah, a heap of letters, eh?"

"Yes, and every one of 'em addressed to 'my own darling Frank,'" said Sloman, maliciously.

A scowl settled upon Murray's face as he answered. "Hang him! he shan't receive them very much longer. All in his dressing-case, eh?"

Sloman nodded and smoked.

"Come, you're a deuced sharp, 'cute fellow. Safe, too, I'll swear by your eyes. Such brilliance never shone from a treacherous skull."

This curious compliment Sloman appeared to

receive with much complacence; a slow smile writhed about his mouth, and he sucked his pipe with great solemnity of manner.

"Let's hear how you managed it," said Murray.

And agreeably with the request, Sloman proceeded to communicate that with which the reader is already acquainted.

"But," asked Murray, "won't the notes be missed at once?"

"Perhaps, and perhaps not."

"But four hundred pounds!"

"If it were four thousand it would be the same. I see you don't understand. Now, look here. In our bank we have what we call a strong-room. Hamilton keeps the key. In it is kept all the money but a small sum, which is locked up every night in the till."

"Yes," said Murray.

"When money is wanted, Hamilton gives me the key, and I go down-stairs and fetch what is necessary. This morning he thought business might come in, but I saw that the weather would be bad, and knew it would be an idle day. However, he told me to prepare for it by getting up some cash, and so I took the key and went

down-stairs, and pocketed the six notes which are now in his dressing-case."

"Yes: but won't the six notes be missed?"

"Not until the cash in the strong-room is brought up and counted."

"And when will that be?"

"Perhaps to-morrow, and perhaps not for a week."

"Ah, now I understand: the longer the better, eh?"

"Quite the reverse: the sooner the better. We don't want him to find out the secret in his dressing-case. If he doesn't suggest counting it to-morrow, I shall. But we'll see."

Murray rose and patted him on the shoulder. "You're a shrewd fellow," said he, "and I'll leave the matter entirely in your hands. Revenge is a sweet thing, isn't it, my friend?"

"*My* revenges are," answered Sloman.

"Ay, you're right. Heaven save me from ever insulting you. Though what would you do to me if I were to?"

"It would depend upon the nature of the insult," said Sloman.

"Well, supposing I were to say to you what Hamilton said?"

There was a lurid glow in Sloman's eyes as he answered, "Say it, and you'll see!"

"But I am not a banker!"

"No: but you're a man."

"Well, what of that?"

Sloman made no answer, but sat moodily smoking for awhile. At last he said, "Come, don't let us talk of that."

There was a certain air of authority in his manner which insensibly subdued Murray. He cast a look at his companion, and drawing out his pocket-book, exclaimed, "And now for my promise." Then he extracted a fifty-pound note, and handed it to Sloman.

"And fifty more when the business is finished," he said.

Sloman leisurely stretched forth his hand and took the money. He glanced at its amount, and then extended it across the lamp.

"It's a good one," he said: "oblige me by passing the tobacco." He knocked the ashes from his pipe by striking it against the heel of his boot, then filled it, and rolling the bank-note up into the shape of a spill, pushed it between the bars of the grate, and ignited his tobacco with it. He let the paper consume until it was

too hot to hold, then he threw it into the fire, and the draught carried it up the chimney.

Murray's face was flushed with anger. "Why, you fool," he cried, "are you drunk or mad? Didn't you know that it was a fifty-pound note?"

"No names, please, Mr. Murray," he said, coolly.

"But why waste such a large sum? If you didn't want it, why not have given it to me back?"

"You gave it me, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And to do what I like with, I suppose?"

"Certainly not to burn it."

"But I chose to, and what then?"

"You'll get no more."

"Yes, I will. When our business is done, you will give me another fifty-pound note."

"But what will be the use of it to you?"

"To burn."

There was something so extraordinary in this creature's manner and replies, that Murray paused for an explanation. After a few moments it came.

"You offered me one hundred pounds, as well as your influence, as a shareholder, to advance

my interests in the bank, to commit what you dared not attempt. Very good. I accepted your offer, and have performed half of my undertaking. But do you think that I do this for *you?* do you imagine that your views alone are the incitement to this undertaking? I tell you that it is for *me*—for my revenge that this is worked—no more. Yet you insulted me by offering me money! you thought that a paltry hundred pounds would bind me to your service, and by my villainous schemes help yours! And I accepted it. But what of that? You thought me a Jew—and you thought to goad me by the Jew's spur—Money! Very well. I have been goaded, not by you, but by myself: not by your promise, but by my insult. I have performed what I have performed for me alone; you have followed in the path I have cleared, and you are welcome. But for this I must have your money. I take it because I am not a fool! I burn it because I am not a Jew!"

Whether this speech had been previously matured, or whether it was the spontaneous effusion of a vexed spirit, cannot be known. But that the energetic manner in which it was delivered helped to satisfy Murray with the just-

ness of Sloman's arguments, was evident in the approving nod that followed the conclusion of his friend's declaration.

"Very well," he said, "very well! have it your own way. You're a shrewd fellow, and know what's right. And now let us consider the best way of carrying on and out our scheme, so as to render effectual what you have so admirably commenced."

These two congenial souls accordingly entered into a discussion that lasted until the servant came to announce that dinner was served. But as the result of their conversation will appear hereafter, it were useless to detail it here. Sloman, when interrupted by the servant, was for going, but Murray insisted on his remaining to dinner with him. This invitation, after some hesitation, was accepted.

At half-past twelve on the same night, the moon shining in a clear sky that had replaced the clouded welkin of the day, illumined the pathway of a hunchback who was reeling up the lane that led into High Street. Sometimes he emerged from beneath the trees into the broad moonshine, and the shadow that he cast upon the pale ground was such as might have led a

spectator to believe that the grotesque shape before him belonged to some imp, loosened from hell to roam the moonlit world and to scare the traveller into idiocy or white hairs. Sometimes this being sang, and sometimes he laughed, and often would he leap in a kind of mysterious dance, and whirl his long arms about him with all the vehemence of an increasing intoxication. Once he turned and faced the moon, and stood gibbering at it for awhile, his hoarse voice breaking the surrounding silence with a wild and startling effect. Then he resumed his path, blaspheming horribly, always swinging his long arms about him, and sometimes singing and sometimes dancing: his lips and tongue never still.

Certainly Mr. Sloman drunk presented a curious spectacle.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE BANK.

Two days passed away, and on the morning of the third at nine o'clock the bank was opened, and Hamilton entered his little back office. He seemed in unusually high spirits, for he was humming a merry song to himself, and his eyes were bright and glad with laughter. The cause was in a letter which he held in his hand, and which was an answer from the directors of the bank in London to a request of Hamilton to raise his salary. A formal reply it was, with a great seal on the envelope which was large and blue. Thus its enclosure ran, after a few preliminary remarks touching the "acknowledgment of your favour," &c.

"The directors, having considered your request, commission me in reply to inform you that they have much pleasure in acceding to it, as they are

very well satisfied with the manner in which you have promoted the interests of the bank at Y——. Your salary, therefore, dating from this —— day of March, is increased from one hundred and ten to one hundred and thirty pounds per annum."

"Twenty pounds more!" thought Hamilton. "Only let it touch a hundred and fifty and Eveleen shall come and share it with me. On this income we might subsist;—but a hundred and thirty—" he shook his head thoughtfully, and fell into a reverie.

The truth was Eveleen would have been claimed by him a long time ago, but he grew terrified at the prospect of bringing her to a home so different from that to which she was accustomed. He well knew the power of her love: he was perfectly well aware that she would undergo any privation to be with him; but his own affection dashed, perhaps, by a little pride, hesitated at the step; for Eveleen De Courcy to descend from her present station to be the acknowledged wife of the bank manager would be a signal for the scandal-mongers of the place, to point, to whisper and to exaggerate. Moreover he knew the effect of humiliation upon love.

Absolute as was his trust in his darling, he dreaded lest that by a revelation of their connection before the father's sanction had been gained, the rumours that might ensue would mar the sweetness of Eveleen's happiness. So his constant remarks were "wait, darling, wait. My income will soon be increased, and then I shall be enabled to offer you a home more worthy of your acceptance. And who knows but that in the meantime your father may relent? may yield to that nameless sadness which has become now a part of your disposition, and construing it into your affection for me, suffer us once more to meet each other; and, perhaps, openly to declare what must, alas, still remain a secret." Thus would he write to her, and after such letters she would grow cheerful and hopeful; but soon the yearning to be by her husband would be renewed, and letters would reach him blotted by tears and deploring the lingering, ever lingering separation.

Such a letter had reached him the preceding day, and he awaited with intense expectation the arrival of the post that should bring him a reply from the directors. He had not specified any particular sum, but had trusted to their gene-

rosity. Sometimes he thought that they might possibly allow him one hundred and fifty; but then he instinctively felt that an advance of forty pounds would be held as preposterous by the stern old gentlemen who controlled the affairs of the bank. Should such, however, prove the case, he thought he would forthwith proceed to Mr. De Courcy, relate to him his alliance with Eveleen, and claim her at once as his wife. Come what might, on a hundred and fifty a year they could snap their fingers at the world, and Eveleen could enjoy herself.

But the directors' reply dashed his hopes, and they fell; but not far. It was at all events half of what he had anticipated, and now in his little back office he sat revolving in his mind whether this money would be sufficient to support them. "On a hundred and fifty we might subsist:—but a hundred and thirty"—said he: he shook his head thoughtfully, and fell into a reverie.

Whilst thus occupied, Murray suddenly entered the bank holding a carpet-bag, and in a peremptory voice requested to see the manager.

Sloman gave him a significant look: and then, in a humble manner, asked him to walk into the manager's room.

But at the sound of his voice Hamilton had come forward.

"Good morning, sir: can I speak with you in private for a few minutes?" said Murray.

"Certainly; will you walk in?"

He entered, and the door was closed. Sloman glanced at it thoughtfully for a moment; then resumed his writing.

This was the first time Hamilton had seen Murray since his rencontre in the garden with him. He had once or twice been in the bank, but Sloman had transacted his business. Now he had requested to see Hamilton personally. On business of course; and in business private hatred is forgotten. In the street Hamilton would have cut him as Murray, the man: but in the office it was no longer the same: he was now Murray, the client.

Nevertheless a mutual embarrassment was visible. Hamilton strove hard to subdue his emotions and partially succeeded.

"I presume," he said, "you desire to see me on business?"

"I do; and on very awkward business too," Murray answered, roughly. Yet in spite of this roughness he appeared greatly agitated. His face

was pale, and his fingers were nervously twitching at his watch chain. He sat down and drew out his pocket-book, which he laid, Hamilton noticed, tremblingly upon the table.

"I will be brief with you," he said, "as believe me, such a *tête-à-tête* affords me little pleasure."

Hamilton's satirical nod of the head implied that the feeling was reciprocal.

"In a word, a cheque of mine upon your bank has been forged."

Hamilton started, and then exclaimed, hurriedly, "Are you sure of this?"

Murray opened his pocket-book in silence, and produced a cheque, which he handed to Hamilton. "I found it amongst others in my pass-book which you sent to me yesterday. In looking over it last evening I found my balance debited with twenty-one pounds ten shillings more than I had drawn. You perceive that is the amount."

Hamilton looked at the cheque and said it was.

"I went over all my private accounts, but could find that I had entered no such sum. Unfortunately your clerk furnished me, though at my request, with some detached cheques. I

should have taken the book; it would have made me more secure."

"But this is your writing!"

Murray shrugged his shoulders. "So I could have sworn. It is a wonderful imitation."

"This is serious—very serious. Come with me, sir." Hamilton stepped into the bank, and Murray followed him.

"Mr. Sloman," said Hamilton, "let me look at the ledger, please."

Sloman, who appeared busily writing, looked up, and pushed a large account book over to the manager. Hamilton glanced at the cheque. "It was drawn on Tuesday, March 3rd," he said.

Then turning over the leaves of the ledger, he referred to a page, upon the top of which was written the date in question. Running his finger down the entries he suddenly stopped. "Here it is," he exclaimed; "debit on March 3rd, Mr. William Murray, twenty-one pounds ten. You see it?"

Murray looked and said yes, there it was.

"Whose writing is this?" asked Hamilton.

"Mr. Gamyn's, sir," answered Sloman.

"Mr. Gamyn, come here for a minute. Is this your entry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know anything of this cheque? But, first of all, who paid it?"

"Let me look at it, sir," said Sloman. Then, after a moment's inspection, he said, "I did."

"Do you remember the person to whom you paid it?"

Sloman thought, he scratched his head, he knitted his brows, he cast his eyes everywhere. But to no purpose. "No, sir, I can't a bit."

"Are you certain?"

Sloman looked steadily at Hamilton, and answered, "Certain."

"It's to bearer, too," said Hamilton, "a fact that will render the robbery doubly difficult to detect. Had it been 'to order,' we should have found a clue in the signature."

"That's your business," said Murray. "I suppose the bank will refund the loss?"

Slightly nettled at his composure, Hamilton said, "Perhaps. That is to say, when all hopes of discovery have vanished. Not before."

Murray touched his hat with his cane, and was about leaving, when Hamilton said, "Pray, have you made inquiries amongst your servants?"

"I have two only. They are both old, both

women, and neither can read, much less write. I am satisfied that the scoundrel is not in my household."

"Where, then, do you suspect?"

Murray shrugged his shoulders, and said, "I am quite at a loss to know."

"You will, at all events, permit *us* to institute inquiries in your household?"

"Certainly: whatever I can do to facilitate your search you may command. I shall miss the coach if I am not quick. Good morning."

Hamilton bowed haughtily, and Murray went out.

When he was gone, Hamilton turned to Sloman, and said, "He takes it very coolly, does he not?"

"Perhaps he is rich, sir," said Sloman.

"This is a very serious affair. I hardly know what course to adopt. Can you not recollect the person who offered you the cheque?"

"I have been trying to do so, sir; and have some faint remembrance of his being a countryman. I am sure it was a man. But it was so long ago, sir." He spoke humbly, and with much show of meekness and desire of right.

"I will go to the police-office at once; there is

no time to be lost." And snatching up his hat, Hamilton hastily went out.

"What do you think of it?" said Sloman to Gamyn.

"I don't know," answered Gamyn, simply. "What do you?"

"Me! oh, I never think." And Sloman smiled. "By the way, did you notice the manager ——?"

"What?"

"How he changed colour once or twice when Mr. Murray spoke to him!"

"No."

"Oh, didn't you! All right, it's all right," and Sloman began whistling.

"What's all right?" said Gamyn.

But Sloman continued whistling, without volunteering any explanation. So with a puzzled expression, Gamyn resumed his seat on his tall stool.

A quarter of an hour after, Hamilton returned. "Mr. Sloman," said he, "I have seen the Inspector, and he requires you and Mr. Gamyn to attend the police-office to-morrow. I told him all that you had said, but he wishes to examine you himself."

"Very well, sir," said Sloman.

"And after Mr. Sloman has been you will go, Mr. Gamyn," said Hamilton.

"Yes, sir."

"And now," continued Hamilton, "we will prepare for this evening's balance by counting the cash below. Business seems slack, and we may as well be doing something. So go down stairs, Mr. Sloman, and bring up the bags and the notes; here's the key; and go you, Mr. Gamyn, and lend him a hand."

The two clerks disappeared one after the other, and presently re-appeared, bearing each his load of coin. They deposited their burdens on the counter, and the counting forthwith began.

The gold and silver were found to be correct, and Hamilton, wetting his finger in the true banker's style, proceeded to count the notes.

He went through them regularly, and at the end referred to a slip of paper by his side.

"Hallo!" he cried, "I don't make them right." Then he commenced to count again, but with the same result as before. A look of anxiety overspread his features, and he went through the notes a third time. "I make them four hundred

pounds, short," he said, nervously, and evidently alarmed. "Try you, Mr. Sloman."

Sloman took the bundle in his hand, and deliberately proceeded to count them.

"Well?" asked Hamilton, with eagerness.

"I make them four hundred pounds short, too," answered Sloman.

There was a long pause, and Hamilton covered his face with his hands. At last he said, in a voice terrible with its anxiety, "Do you know anything of this, Mr. Sloman?"

Sloman gave a feigned start, and said, reproachfully, "Sir!"

"What does this mean?" continued Hamilton, pointing to the notes; "you and I only have had access to them. It is between us. Answer me, who is the thief?"

Sloman cowered before the large steady eye that closely scrutinised his features. With averted gaze, he replied, "Search me, if you like."

"I will," answered Hamilton.

Without a word Sloman took everything out of his pockets, and finished by turning them inside out.

"And now are you satisfied?"

"With your clothes. But after business you and I and the Inspector will walk to your lodgings."

Sloman grew black in the face. His passion seemed strangling him. He approached Hamilton, who coolly kept his eyes fixed upon him, and hissed, "This is calling me a thief!"

"One of us is, and my conscience acquits me."

"To-day you shall search my lodgings, to-morrow I will search yours."

"You shall."

"Not long ago I was a hump-backed Jew; to-day I am a thief; to-morrow I shall be—what?"

"Perhaps a convict." This was said angrily. The hunchback's manner irritated Hamilton.

Sloman bowed, and then with a loud laugh, so full of hatred, rage, every malignant passion, that Gamyn shuddered as he heard it, he returned to his seat.

"Put that money away first," said Hamilton.

He obeyed in silence, and the two clerks, accompanied by the manager, went down stairs. "There is no longer honesty in the world," said Hamilton. "Henceforth this strong-room shall only be entered in my presence."

There was no reply; and thus, without busi-

ness, the afternoon wore away, and four o'clock was pointed at by the steel finger of Time over the mantelpiece. Then the bank was closed, and Hamilton and Sloman went into the street together.

CHAPTER X.

SEARCH.

INSPECTOR SMART was the tallest man in Y——. He was a giant. He had feet that spread out before him like large shovels; and his breast, legs and arms would have furnished to the statuary models for an Atlas. He was reported to be possessed of an enormous appetite. It was once confidently asserted that he had been known to eat, at one sitting, a whole leg of mutton. Whether true or not, he had never thought fit to deny it; and this fact went, with a good many others, to render him very formidable to the people of Y—— in general, and very terrible to the rogues of Y—— in particular.

Yet, in spite of his great bulk, his voice was thin and weak. It seemed to have been filtered in its passage from his stomach to his tongue. This was rather a drawback to him; for importance gains immensely by a powerful voice. Never-

theless, what he lost in sound he made good in appearance and manner. He had only to shake his fist and frown, and the sturdiest knave would quail and shiver before him.

Y—— was not conspicuous for much villany. For fifty years it had only sent one man to be hanged, and three for transportation. Its other offences were mostly limited to ebriety, trespassing, mendicancy, and such like; and these very infrequent. Hence, Inspector Smart had not much to do. He had half a dozen men under him, and his chief employment was to see that they did their duty; which meant to reprimand them if they were not always visible when on duty, also to drag them from a small tavern in a back street, towards which these six men discovered a great partiality.

To such a man a crime was a boon. Not a mean, contemptible peccadillo, but a hearty good piece of villany. A poacher he contemplated with satisfaction; a housebreaker afforded him solid pleasure; but a murderer was a dish he had not yet tasted, and therefore one for which he panted with all the ardency of desire. Sometimes of a night he would say to his wife, "Tomorrow, perhaps, a leg or an arm will be found

and brought me;" and his wife always replied, "No such luck;" and she had hitherto proved correct.

When Hamilton informed him that a forgery had been committed, his face broadened into a smile, and he said, "Good." Then, after a few moments' silent enjoyment of the fact, he proceeded to question Hamilton, who volunteered him all the information he could. This interview had resulted, first of all, in the request that he might be permitted to examine the bank clerks, and next an assurance that, on the return of Murray, he would proceed to his house and examine him.

At four o'clock, Inspector Smart returned from a walk over the town, and, seating himself in his station before a bright little fire that blazed on the hearth, gave himself up to the contemplation of the business before him.

He had been occupied thus some ten minutes, when a rap at the door caused him to look around, and he beheld Hamilton and Sloman standing before him. He withdrew his large feet from the fender, and, in a voice rendered thinner by a cold in the head, he asked, "What now, gentlemen?"

"There has been a robbery committed on the bank," answered Hamilton, "and I request your attendance to search this gentleman's lodgings," pointing to Sloman.

The Inspector stood up and went over to his desk in the corner, before which he sat himself down. Then suddenly he cried out, "Richards!"

"Yes!" answered a faint voice down the passage outside.

"Here." A bony constable entered the office, and stood military-wise, bolt upright, with his arms straight down beside him.

"Put that young man in the dock."

The constable went to a little semicircular rail that projected itself from a corner, and, raising the bar, told Mr. Sloman to walk in. Sloman hesitated and turned pale. The order was repeated, and Sloman obeyed. Then the bar was put back, and the policeman drew himself upright again, motionless and silent.

"You charge this young man with robbing the bank?" said Inspector Smart.

"No!" answered Hamilton.

The pen fell from the Inspector's hand, and he opened his mouth. "Then why do you bring him here?"

"I merely suspect him, and wish you to assist me in searching his lodgings."

"But that's equivalent to a charge of robbery," said Inspector Smart, frowning at the prospect of this business slipping from his hands.

Hamilton's ignorance of the law had led him into this error. He had forgotten that, in the eyes of a policeman, to suspect is to charge.

"Will you make your depositions, please," said the Inspector, resuming his pen, and opening a book containing the charge-sheets.

"This is all I have to say:—the strong-room of the bank, in which is kept the bulk of our specie, has been robbed of four hundred pounds. Two only have access to this room. It is impregnable; and even if it were not so, there are no marks of violence to prove that it is the work of a burglar or a stranger. The two only who have entered this room are myself and that young gentleman. Hence one of us must be the thief. I wish therefore to have his lodgings searched."

Whilst he spoke, the Inspector was employed in minuting his details down. When Hamilton had ceased there was a short silence, interrupted by the scratching of the Inspector's pen. At last he looked up. His face wore an expression

of great solemnity; and he eyed Sloman heavily and grimly.

"What do you say to this charge, prisoner?"

The word "prisoner" made Hamilton start and change colour. He regretted, for a moment, the result of his impetuosity. Yet in his heart he felt certain that Sloman was the thief. To search his lodgings by himself he could not. He was compelled to solicit the sanction of the law; and in doing so he had unconsciously charged Sloman with the crime. What was to be done? It was too late to retract. His evidence had been given, and the subject now must be pursued to its conclusion. Moreover, he was the responsible individual. Were the money not forthcoming, or the robbery not discovered, he himself might be charged with embezzlement by the directors. In one fatal moment his character might be hopelessly ruined—blasted for ever. Then where would be his schemes, his hopes for the future?—and Eveleen!

Such were the thoughts that swept tumultuously across his mind, and conspired to render him determined to pursue the only available course that was opened to him, and which he had adopted. Let the tender-hearted reader

consider his position, his character, his whole future which depended on the integrity of that character, and judge not.

Upon Sloman that word had the most desolating effect. His cheek grew first white, then yellow; his legs trembled; the muscles round his mouth worked with a strange spasmodic motion; and he griped the iron bar of the railing in which he was environed to prevent himself, perhaps, from falling.

"What do you say to the charge, prisoner?"

"I am innocent; so help me, as I live, sir, I am innocent."

He spoke piteously, in a sort of whine; and, after a moment's pause, he repeated again, "I am innocent."

"Nothing can be done until we have made the search," said the Inspector, closing his book; "and now, if you are ready, we'll start, sir."

The constable raised the bar of the dock, and liberated Sloman, who stepped out with much haste. Then they left the police-office, and walked down High Street, Sloman on one side of the Inspector, and Hamilton on the other. Sometimes the trio provoked a stare from the passer-by, but otherwise they continued their way

without any particular notice, people, by whom they were all very well known, imagining that Hamilton was endeavouring to secure the police accounts for his bank. At the bottom of the street they met Mr. De Courcy, who, when they had passed, shrugged his shoulders, and said to himself, "Ah, what an escape my girl has had! A banker's clerk, and the friend and associate of policemen!"

Sloman lived on the first floor of a small house situated at the end of the town. Its proprietor was an old widow, a lone woman, who had lived all her life at Y——, and to whom the world was not round, but long, for it was comprised in two words,—"High Street." People said that she was respectable, and doubtless she was; but Sloman found her avaricious and grasping, and often loudly lamented her inexorable conduct in presenting him her bill with a punctuality that was terrible to a young man, whose income was seventy-five pounds a-year, and, what was worse, her obstinate objection to leave the room without the money, there and then. This elderly person had never forgiven her lodger his tyrannical behaviour to Gamyn, by which he had been compelled to leave her, and by whose going she lost

eight shillings a week. Hence she paid the hunchback out by a system of punctual demands that became, at last, a heavy exaction. Nor could he help himself, for there were only two lodging-houses in the town; and he occupied one, and Gamyn the other.

On replying to the deafening summons at the door, the old woman nearly fainted at the sight of Inspector Smart; for this being she had, hitherto, beheld only at a distance, and regarded him with all the awe due to a man who to strength of limb united power of position. As his vast body very nearly choked up the doorway, she did not see the two others who stood behind him; and, therefore, concluding him to be alone, dropped a curtsey, and requested to know his business.

"You'll soon know it, mam," answered the Inspector, pushing in past her and turning round to his companions. "Now young man," he continued, addressing Sloman, "go first, please, and lead the way to your room."

"Why, wot's this ere all about?" screamed the old woman, as the three, ascending the old wooden staircase, made it groan beneath their united weights.

The Inspector stopped, and, turning round, shook his finger at her, and exclaimed, "Go below and keep quiet. We don't want to trouble you, and, what's more, we ain't a going to be troubled by you. So jist hold your noise and keep quiet until we come down, then you'll hear all about it;" and so saying he followed Hamilton into the room which Sloman pronounced to be his.

They closed the door, and, at the same moment, the old lady mounted the staircase and put her ear to the keyhole.

Sloman went doggedly to a corner and seated himself, folding his arms, and watching the movements of Hamilton with a fierce and malignant expression.

"Your keys," said Inspector Smart.

Sloman put his hand into his pocket, drew forth a bunch, and threw them at his feet.

To say nothing of the ungraciousness of the action, it was highly impolitic; because the anger which such contemptuous treatment would naturally provoke in any man, would, in the case of a stout man, be much further aggravated. Inspector Smart frowned savagely at Sloman, who was looking hard another way, and stooped to pick

up the keys. Once, twice, thrice he essayed, but to no purpose; nature, comfort, or his tailor forbidding his person to form any figure beyond a right angle.

Hamilton, pitying his efforts, advanced and offered him the keys, and the search forthwith began.

There was not much to unlock, for everything the Inspector tried he found open. Hamilton remained apart, looking on: it was impossible for him to assist in such work. The Inspector appeared to suffer, however, from no such qualms. He opened the drawers, took out their contents, shook them, sounded them, opened the linen, put his fingers into the socks, and, in short, left nothing unsearched. He felt in the pockets of the coats hanging up; tossed the counterpane, the blankets, the sheets off the bed, and heartily shook them. He raised the mattress and peered beneath it, then felt all over it; next stood on the edge of the bed, and ran his hand along the tops of the curtains. An indefatigable searcher indeed! Whatever met his view in which there was the remotest probability of a bank-note being sewn up or concealed, he thoroughly examined and searched. A few ornaments,—

such ornaments as may be found in a country lodging-house,—stood on the mantelpiece. They consisted of two small jars; an ancient figure, in china, of a cock; a shepherd; and a large gilt shell. In a trice the Inspector's thick fingers were ransacking the jars; had shaken the cock; had turned the shepherd upside down; and had brought the shell to his ear, and then to his eye, but to no purpose. No notes were found screwed up in them; no money tumbled from them. Everything had been searched, and Sloman was, so far, innocent. "What," thought Hamilton, "could he have done with all the money?"

During these manœuvres, the object of their suspicion sat with his arms folded and his eyes fixed on the ground. Sometimes he would raise them and smile at the huge form of the Inspector moving so fruitlessly about; at others he would glance at Hamilton; and then a scowl and a writhing of the lips would follow; and the eyes would again seek the ground.

The Inspector paused, and looked around him. "Nothing here, it seems," he said. "But I hain't done yet," he added; and moving to the door, he opened it. As he did so, the old woman who was leaning against it outside, with her ear to the key-

hole, fell forward, much to the amazement of everybody.

"Hallo!" cried the Inspector; "you're the very person I want. Have you got such a thing as a hammer in the house?"

"What for?" was the surly reply.

"Never mind what for: have you got a hammer in the house?"

But as he spoke her eye had caught the bed. Whereupon she set up a cry, and commenced wringing her hands. "Oh dear! oh dear! look at that there bed! there's a mess! there's a state to be in! a riflin' and destroyin' of other people's property. Oh dear, dear; what do you mean by bringin' sich ruin on my head," she added, shaking her fist at Sloman; "is this the way you repays me for my attention!"

"Now then, come, come, come!" said the Inspector, looking at her knowingly; "what's your little game, eh? Have you got a hammer in the house?"

"No, I ain't! and if I had, you shouldn't have it to go knocking my very house down about my ears."

"What do you want a hammer for?" inquired Hamilton, stepping forward.

The Inspector pointed significantly at the carpet. "Who knows what it may hide?" he whispered.

Hamilton shrugged his shoulders. "Impossible," he replied; "there can be nothing there."

The old woman had noticed the gesture, and caught the meaning. She flung herself down on her knees, and in a really moving manner besought the gentlemen before her not to touch her carpet. No one knew the difficulty of putting it down after it had once been taken up; and then the dust it would raise—"all her things would be spoiled, sartin." This appeal, supported by the request of Hamilton, determined the Inspector to relinquish his project; nevertheless, many a look, fraught with doubt, he cast on the floor; and many on the old woman who stood in the doorway, wiping her eyes on her apron.

The search having proved so far fruitless, the Inspector next took Sloman's landlady aside, and cross-examined her before Hamilton. She was asked if her lodger had been more extravagant lately; if he had kept later hours; if she had observed him to be possessed of more money than usual, &c.—to all of which she answered in the

negative. Nevertheless, Inspector Smart copied her name and address in his pocket-book, and bade her know that she might expect soon to be called up before a magistrate. With which pleasing intimation—an intimation that made the poor old woman lay her hand on her heart, and fall to weeping copiously again—they returned to Sloman.

When about departing, some little difficulty arose between Sloman and the Inspector. The first wanted to be left where he was; the other insisted upon his accompanying him.

"And what do you want to do with me?" asked Sloman, deadly pale.

The Inspector, who had not forgotten the affair of the key, coolly replied, "To lock you up, of course."

"What, all night!"

"Yes; but I promise you I'll take you before the magistrate early in the morning."

Sloman seemed about to faint; and Hamilton, greatly distressed, offered to stand bail for him.

"Not for fifty million bails, sir," answered the Inspector, emphatically: "do you know, sir, that this is a very serious charge?"

"I know it; but I will guarantee his appearance in the morning."

"Can't do it; can't do it;" and the Inspector shook his head slowly, but hopelessly. Then suddenly turning, he seized Sloman by the arm, and exclaimed, "Come, we can't be here all night. Come along with you." And as if he had been an infant, Sloman found himself almost instantaneously transmitted from the end of the room to the door. When descending the stairs, he looked back at Hamilton, who followed behind, and shook his fist in his face—

"Curse you!" he half shrieked; "*you* have brought me to this! I am innocent—you know it! why should my rooms be searched and not yours?"—to the Inspector—"why don't you search him? He may be the thief. I am innocent—he knows it; and yet he allows you to lock me up all night! Search him, I say, search him!"

"He's the responsible party," answered the Inspector, laconically; "his word's better than yours. Come along!"

And amidst a volley of execrations from the hunchback, in whose mouth there seemed assembled for the occasion the foullest terms in

the English language; and who, in his rage, sometimes frothed at the mouth, and sometimes spat in the air, the Inspector marched away with his captive, and in a very short while had him safely locked up in a small cell, where a long deal board served him at once for a seat and a bed, and a couple of coarse rugs for a covering and a pillow. Fortunately for him his transit through the street occurred when it was dark; and he thus escaped observation.

Hamilton returned to his home sad and sorrowful. A nameless foreboding of coming evil oppressed his heart, already sufficiently lacerated by the scene he had witnessed. On his arrival he sat down and wrote a letter to the Secretary of the London Bank, acquainting him with what had occurred, and soliciting advice and assistance to detect the forgery and the robbery.

He then filled a couple of sheets to Eveleen, trusting the next day to get them delivered to her. He still retained the services of the boy whom we have already seen, though such a precarious messenger he felt he could not trust for long. Yet he had no other means of communicating with his wife. To have addressed her letters to the Poste-Restante would have been

more hazardous than the mode of communication he now employed. De Courcy he knew to be a frequent visitor to the Post-office, and the post-master, who was well acquainted with him would too surely reveal the constant visits of Eveleen. Never was any lover, never any husband surrounded with difficulties of so insurmountable a kind.

In the letter he wrote to her now, he dwelt at length upon the painful affair with Sloman; exonerating his conduct by pleading his love, his hopes of the future, the fragility of his character, which a breath might mar, and hopelessly blast. He wrote with eloquence, for he dreaded lest calumny or ignorance might anticipate him, and lower him, though but fractionally, in the eyes of his wife. He concluded by expressing, though slightly, the foreboding that weighed upon him; and added, that he would no longer suffer this tedious separation; that in the course of a few days he would call upon her father and claim her, since Mr. De Courcy seemed in nowise inclined to alter his conduct or his views; and then, come what might, supported by her, he was powerful enough to face, to wrestle with the world, and perhaps, in the end, conquer it.

Thus he amused himself in endeavouring to shape fate; whilst, in reality, fate was grimly preparing to break his heart.

On the following morning Sloman was brought before the magistrate, a stockbroker named Hurl. A little pompous man was Mr. Hurl, who conceived himself big with the destiny of those charged before him. He sat at nine o'clock, in a small room in a building called the Town-Hall. He occupied the head of an oblong table, upon which were papers and pens, and an old, small Bible, on one side of which was seated a young man who officiated as clerk; it being his duty to administer the oath, to enter the evidences as they were given, and to reread them at the conclusion of each delivery.

The bank was closed on that morning; Hamilton and Gamyn both being called to attend the court.

Sloman was sallow and restless. His eyes were bloodshot for want of sleep, and his form during the night seemed to have shrunk, for his clothes hung loosely about him. He presented a most unprepossessing spectacle, and the little stockbroker, as he fixed his small, money-making eyes upon him, felt satisfied in his heart that he was guilty, though as yet he knew not of what.

It would be tedious to relate the transactions of this little court of law; how Mr. Hurl, with head on one side, listened attentively to the declamation of Hamilton, to the frightened whisper of Gamyn, and to the weak delivery of Inspector Smart. No new light had been shed upon the strange matter during the night, and Sloman persisted in asserting his innocence. He was, therefore, remanded, pending the necessary investigations; and though Hamilton again volunteered to be bail, and not only he, but one or two others whom he said he could secure, the offer was rejected; Mr. Hurl probably taking his cue from the expression of severity upon the face of the stalwart Inspector, who stood grimly by the side of the prisoner.

Hamilton and Gamyn returned to their occupation: the shutters of the bank were taken down, and business was again resumed. This was at a quarter to twelve. Half an hour later Hamilton went in search of his little messenger to deliver his letter to Eveleen, and having found him, returned and seated himself in his back office.

The time wore away heavily. No clients entered to relieve the monotony of their idleness,

and Hamilton dared not leave, anxious as he was to assist the Inspector in his investigations and inquiries. For, firstly, Gamyn could not be left in charge of the bank; and, secondly, he momentarily anticipated the arrival of some one from London, in reply to the letter he had forwarded the preceding evening.

For several hours he remained seated in his office, sometimes reading, sometimes writing, but with his mind always agitated and saddened by the variety of thoughts that crowded it. He had tasted no food since the morning; he had no desire to eat; and time after time he postponed his dinner, until his servant declared it was no longer eatable. It was now half-past three.

The hand of the clock was exactly upon the half hour, when there came a violent ring at the bell, accompanied by a prolonged and heavy knocking. There was something unusual in this, for persons who desired to see either Hamilton the man, or Hamilton the manager, generally entered the bank first. This noisy summons was upon the private door at the side.

There was a pause, followed by a little conversation, in which Hamilton fancied he heard the tones of Inspector Smart; and shortly after, the

servant entered, and announced two gentlemen on business. At the same moment the Inspector and a little man in a great-coat entered. A glance at the latter revealed to Hamilton that he was one of the directors of his bank, and that his name was David Moore.

Hamilton bowed, and was about offering them chairs, when Inspector Smart stepped forward, and exclaimed, "I am ordered to take you in charge for forgery; for forging a cheque of Mr. William Murray upon your own bank." At the same time he produced his warrant.

Hamilton gazed from one to the other in vacant astonishment; and then, clasping his hand to his forehead, he suddenly dropped into a chair. The Inspector came forward, and laid his hand upon his shoulder. "For forgery," he said, "and I am empowered to search your house for any documents that may assist the inquiry."

Hamilton started to his feet, and shook the Inspector's hand off its resting-place. "Stand aside, and let me know what this all means!" he exclaimed.

The Inspector, who conceived his dignity wounded by this manner of addressing him, again approached Hamilton; but the little man,

rising, laid his hand upon the Inspector's arm, and besought him to remain quiet. "Pray, seat yourself, sir," he said, soothingly, "and let us comply with this gentleman's request, and explain the motive of our mission."

Thus addressed, the frown on the Inspector's brow relaxed, and he sat heavily down.

"We choose, sir," said Mr. Moore, mildly, "to make our presence known to you by the back door, not wishing to render it conspicuous by a public entry through the office."

Hamilton made no reply; but with a dilated eye, and a quivering nostril, stood reposing upon his arm against a chair, his gaze fixed upon Mr. Moore.

There was a pause; and then the Inspector said, "You know Mr. Murray, don't you?"

"I must implore you, sir," said Hamilton, addressing Mr. Moore, "to convert yourself into a medium for whatever this fellow has to say to me; his brutal demeanour is grossly offensive, and I cannot really bring myself to reply to him."

This, uttered without looking at the Inspector, in the most contemptuous tone, and with a lip that trembled with a half-subdued sneer, immensely irritated that gentleman. His feet

shuffled uneasily upon the floor, and his rising wrath was barely restrained by the interposition of Mr. Moore, who again laid his hand upon his arm, and implored him to be composed. A gleam of sympathy lurked in the little man's eye; he was evidently inclined to be friendly disposed towards Hamilton.

"I must beg you to remember, sir," he said, "that this officer is but executing his duty. You have been charged with forgery by Mr. William Murray, of Y——, a client of yours, and the Inspector has been commissioned to carry out the law."

"First of all," said Hamilton, "what proofs are there that I should be charged with this crime?"

The Inspector's mouth was preparing to move, when Mr. Moore's hand once more was stretched out. "If you will permit me, sir, I will put you in possession of all the facts of the case with which I am acquainted."

This was spoken with much courtesy of manner. Probably Hamilton's appearance exacted this civility. At any rate he bowed, and seating himself, prepared to listen.

"You must be aware, sir," began Mr. Moore,

"that yesterday was a board-meeting at the head office. We were assembled together, and discussing subjects of importance to those shareholders whose interests we have the honour to represent and direct," and Mr. Moore half rose from his chair, and bowed—apparently to himself—"when we were informed that a gentleman was anxious to see us on a matter of profound moment to those shareholders whose interests——" he suddenly checked himself, remembering that he had previously made use of the same expression; his conversation was now as much addressed to the Inspector as to Hamilton. "After some hesitation we agreed to admit him, contrary to those rules by which our body is governed; and presently there entered a gentleman, who proceeded at once to inform us that a forgery had been committed at Y—— in his name, and that he had strong presumptions to conclude the manager guilty of the crime."

Hamilton remained motionless, although Mr. Moore, by the manner in which he paused, seemed to anticipate a sudden outbreak. "He then went on to say that he had foolishly taken a few leaves from a cheque-book—imagining that as he had a large account opened at another

bank in London, a few would suffice for his necessities. He regretted that he had not taken the book, as it would have secured his money, which out of friendship to the manager he had deposited in his bank. All this, I believe, is correct, sir."

Hamilton bowed his head, but made no reply. There was dawning upon him a terrible fear—a horrible conviction that Murray with the subtlety of a fiend had been slowly and invisibly encircling him in a mesh from which he was powerless to extricate himself. An agonising terror for a moment took possession of his soul, the blood deserted his cheeks, and he looked as you could imagine a man to look, who, standing on the brink of a profound abyss, is conscious of some one approaching him to thrust him in, and he the while powerless to turn and face his destroyer —powerless to fly him!

Mr. Moore gave the Inspector a significant glance, who returned it with a frown equally significant.

"We were surprised and alarmed," continued the little man, "at this information, and hastily discussed amongst ourselves our best mode of operation. My services being volunteered, I was

deputed to accompany Mr. Murray to Y——, and this afternoon at a quarter-past one we started together. On our arrival, my first suggestion was to call upon you; but Mr. Murray, fearing that should you gain a scent of our presence you might be tempted to leave the town, proceeded at once to the police-court, and there formally charged you with robbery."

Hamilton sat still motionless, listening with a bowed head, though they could perceive that the veins of his forehead were swollen as if to bursting, and that the fingers of his hands moved with a convulsive motion.

"No sooner had this charge been made, than this officer," turning to the Inspector, "communicated to us the surprising and equally alarming fact that the same bank had been robbed of four hundred pounds, and that one of the clerks—a Mr. Slo—Slo—" "Sloman" suggested the Inspector—"Sloman was imprisoned by your instrumentality for the theft. Mr. Murray suggested, though with what justice it were too appalling to consider, that he who had committed the forgery was also capable of perpetrating the robbery. He further added that it would be advisable that the course you had adopted to-

wards your clerk should be acted upon towards you. The Inspector, therefore, provided himself with a warrant empowering him to apprehend your person, and to search your abode. He is now here to execute these duties. And such, sir, is all I have to say." And the little man threw himself back in his chair with a jerk, as if happy at having imparted with such success so very painful a communication.

Hamilton still sat with his head bowed upon his breast, motionless and silent.

"Do you hear?" said the Inspector.

There was no reply. The Inspector rose and laid his hand upon his shoulder. As if the touch were an electric shock, Hamilton leaped to his feet. "Do with me what you will!" he exclaimed hurriedly. "But do not touch me, or——" his hand instinctively sought his side, as if feeling there for a weapon. But his flashing eye sufficiently proclaimed his meaning.

"Will you conduct us up-stairs, please?" asked the Inspector in a tone the slightest degree more civil; "we ain't got much time to lose."

Hamilton turned to Mr. Moore. "Sir," he exclaimed, raising aloft one hand, and looking upwards with an expression almost sublime, "I

swear before the living heaven of Justice, of Compassion, of Mercy!—by the sainted dust of my long-departed mother!—by all my hopes of a future immortality—I swear that I am innocent of this crime."

The solemnity with which this solemn speech was uttered, combined with the beauty of the upturned face, visibly moved Mr. Moore. He turned his head aside to conceal the transient emotion, and in doing so he encountered the immobile stare of the Inspector. The smile on his features, and that faint shrug which so plainly said, Bah!—we all know what that sort of thing means—changed Mr. Moore's feelings at once; in Hamilton he perceived no longer the man—only the forger—the thief stood before him. Such is the power of an official gesture!

"Come," exclaimed the Inspector, "you had better lead us up-stairs now, and keep your oaths for the magistrates. You'll want 'em there."

Hamilton gave him a look full of scorn. But he felt the vainness of any mode of appeal to such a lump of brutishness; and so in silence he pushed open the door, and without glancing behind him, walked slowly up-stairs followed by the others.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TABLES TURNED.

THE full force of the evil that was attached to the suspicion of the crime with which he was charged, Hamilton had not as yet fully appreciated. So confident was he of proving his innocence, and so surprised had he been by the sudden event, that between the two emotions his feelings, as it were, seemed neutralised—seemed incapable of glancing beyond the little limits of the present hour into that future, which, in a clearer mood, had presented to him a spectacle, gaunt, terrible, and appalling.

He forgot for the time the taint that this suspicion must inevitably leave upon his character. He forgot that this charge might be as a brand upon his forehead—to mark him as doubtful in the eyes of those to whom doubt was equivalent to a committed wrong. Such thoughts had passed through his mind in his prosecution of

Sloman; but then his clerk, his heart told him, must be guilty; and whilst he pitied him, duty compelled him to persevere in his endeavour to detect the crime.

But this sudden turning of the tables—this amazing and unexpected frown upon the face of fortune, had taken him wholly by surprise. So satisfied was he of his own innocence that he had never imagined for a moment that *he* could be suspected of such a crime. But now that it was so—now that the finger of this hideous suspicion had been pointed at him—one thought, one aim alone took possession of his mind, to prove his innocence, and to emancipate himself immediately from the shackles of this doubt.

That search in Sloman's room only a few hours before, had prepared him for what he had now to expect. Without a word he proceeded to unlock one or two drawers, and then assuring the Inspector that all else was opened, sat himself down, and watched with an almost stern confidence his proceedings.

Once his imagination ran riot, and shaped the body of Mr. Moore in an opposite corner into the form of Sloman. The past he imagined to be a dream. This was the waking and the reality.

He was the culprit whom this dream had pictured to be Sloman, and there sat the hunchback, gloating over his fall, and whispering the Inspector to search well—to search well! But the fancy soon vanished, and in silence the Inspector commenced his search.

He went over a bureau of drawers, and felt in the pockets of some clothes hanging up by the door. Then his eye fell upon the portmanteau beneath the dressing-table, and advancing towards it he pulled it out into the middle of the room.

He threw it open with a jerk, and observed with a smile the number of papers and letters that lay at the bottom. Then he lifted out the dressing-case.

Hamilton rose. "You will find," he said, "nothing in that—only a few love-letters and a lock of hair, which I cherish as sacred, and which I cannot permit any man to touch but myself."

"It's all the same," said the Inspector; "love-letters or not, everything must be searched." He had placed the dressing-case upon the table, his hand resting upon it, and his face turned towards Hamilton.

"Nay," said Mr. Moore, coming forward; "if there are only love-letters there, there can be no wrong, consequently you might leave them untouched."

The Inspector opened his eyes with amazement at the simplicity of this speech, and for an instant felt inclined to consider Mr. Moore as a participator in the crime. He pursed up his mouth to reply, but checking himself, he muttered "I know my dooty;" then he proceeded to open the box.

But Hamilton's hand was upon his arm. "Don't touch it!" he exclaimed.

"Yes I will," said the Inspector, "and don't you touch me!"

"Look! I will open the box myself. I will show you the contents with these hands. Will that satisfy you?"

"Stand aside," answered the Inspector, angrily; and once more the lid went up.

Hamilton darted to the side of the bed, and diving his hand down a canvas bag which was nailed against the wall, he drew out a little case, and seized the pistol it contained. This pistol he always kept loaded by his bedside for a variety of reasons; one was to guard the property of the

bank. Approaching the Inspector he levelled it at his head, and exclaimed, "Stand off from that box, or I will shoot you where you stand!" and he cocked the trigger with his thumb.

Mr. Moore fled precipitately to the other end of the room, and the Inspector hastily recoiling, backed against a chair, over which he fell, and rolled on the ground. At the same moment Hamilton planted himself in front of his dressing-case, his eyes flashing and his breast heaving with rage.

The Inspector gathered himself together and stood up, alarmed though not much hurt. Seeing the pistol still pointed at him he receded step by step again, and stopped not until the wall had brought him up by the side of Mr. Moore. Here they had a short conference together.

"I have no wish to obstruct you in the execution of your duty," said Hamilton, lowering the point of his pistol; "but your hands shall not pollute the contents of this box. If you are willing to let me reveal them to you, I will do so."

Mr. Moore whispered to the tall Inspector by his side, who had to bend double to catch the

words, "You had better fall into his views for peace' sake."

But the Inspector glaring defiance around him, though strange to say his eyes fell the moment they encountered Hamilton's, answered, "Not if I know it." Then shaking his head with much solemnity he added, "This is a regular plant! I know them tricks of old. Leave him to me. I'll eat my head if that box don't contain something amiss."

There was a pretty long pause. Mr. Moore stood throwing imploring glances first at Hamilton, and then at the Inspector. The latter remained quiet, gazing around him in a manner that expressed visible embarrassment, and some small trepidation. Hamilton remained at his post, the pistol still pointing, though lowered, in the direction of his antagonists, and his foot slightly tapping the floor. He was at that moment thinking of Eveleen.

At last the Inspector spoke. "I'm willing to consent to your arrangement, providing you put your pistol away."

"On your honour as a man?"

"Ay, ay," was the grumbling answer, "on my honour as a man, there!"

"Mr. Moore," said Hamilton, "you will guarantee the honesty of this man's promise?"

Mr. Moore glanced at the Inspector who grimly nodded. "Yes," answered the little gentleman with slight hesitation; "yes."

Hamilton uncocked his pistol, and put it away in the case. At the same moment the Inspector and Mr. Moore advanced towards him and the dressing-case.

"Now," said the Inspector, "if you'll just get about opening your box, as we've been here quite long enough."

Hamilton turned towards the table, and in doing so presented his back to his companions; at the same instant the Inspector seized him around the neck with both his arms, and bore him heavily to the ground. Then, placing his knee upon his breast, he drew out of his back pocket a pair of handcuffs, which he slipped with great dexterity over the wrists of the prostrate man. Next he lifted him up by the collar of his coat, and pushed him towards the bed:

"Sit quiet there," he said, "and don't ever try to come any of that game again—so I tell you."

"Is this your honour?" said Mr. Moore, blushing with indignation.

"There ain't no honour in the law," answered the Inspector, coolly. And then, lifting the inner lid out from the dressing-case, he turned the contents out upon the table.

Mr. Moore went and sat himself away in a corner, and the Inspector commenced his pleasing duty. The first thing he opened was the envelope containing Eveleen's hair: he dangled the bright gold shred between his fingers, and exclaimed, looking at Hamilton,

"Was all that fuss about this here trifle?"

But Hamilton sat motionless upon the edge of the bed, his hands pinioned before him, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

The inspection proceeded. There was a short stillness, interrupted by the occasional rustling of the letters as they were taken out of their envelopes and examined. At last the Inspector uttered a cry.

Hamilton and Mr. Moore both looked towards him, and beheld him holding up two cheques, one in each hand.

"Oi! oi!" he was shouting, "both Murray's —oi! oi! cotched him at last, eh? Hourray!

this is glorious!" and his face literally shone with his exultation.

A deadly paleness overspread Hamilton's features. His large eyes were dilated to their full extent, and gazed transfixed upon the two cheques held up before him.

Mr. Moore rushed forward and seized one of the cheques; then, after a moment's examination, he turned to Hamilton, and said—

"Oh, you infamous man! Oh, you sinful impostor! Look!"

He looked, and saw inscribed at the corner of a blank cheque—"William Murray."

The other was the same.

"There are more on 'em here, I warrant ye," said the Inspector; and, with hands trembling with eagerness, he tore open one envelope after another, and in a short while had piled before him the whole of the cheques and the bank notes. Of the latter there were six: amounting to four hundred pounds. Of the former, four; two signed as above, and the others severally bearing the names of "James Freeman," and "Saml. Ranger."

"Do you know these names?" asked Mr. Moore, pointing to them.

"Very well," answered the Inspector; "both respectable men—tradesmen in High Street."

"Are they clients of yours?"—to Hamilton.

There was no reply. The eyes were still wide open: the fingers of the hands were extended, as with amazement, revealing how the arms would have been outstretched had the irons permitted them. There were beads of perspiration upon his forehead; but otherwise, no signs of vitality.

For a moment, they thought him a corpse. The Inspector advanced and touched him. The contact of those rude fingers seemed to awaken him; for he glanced up with a strange stare into the hairy face above him. Then suddenly he bowed his head upon his breast, and wept.

Who could tell the agony in this man's heart at that moment?

The same consideration that had impelled Mr. Moore to enter the bank by the private door, prompted him to secure a cab to have the prisoner conveyed to the station. He went into the street and hailed a vehicle; then, returning to tell the Inspector that it was at the door, went back to his hotel.

The Inspector gathered up the notes and the

cheques, and thrust them into his pocket. Afterwards he approached Hamilton, and taking him by the arm, led him down-stairs. He pushed him hurriedly into the fly, and they were driven off to the police station.

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

It was a strange fact, that, on the same day of the proceedings above detailed, Eveleen had left Y—— for a visit to her aunt at Henley. She had departed by the two o'clock coach, and a quarter of an hour after, the little boy, with Hamilton's missive, approached the hedge in the meadow, and lurked there for nearly two hours and a half. Wearied of this amusement, he repaired to the road facing the house, and at the gate perceived one of the servants conversing with a milkman. Boldly approaching her, he inquired if Miss Eveleen were in? The servant gazed at him with amazement, and wanted to know the reason of his inquiry. The youngster, with a rather wicked shrewdness, invented a tale to the effect that some articles after which she had been inquiring in a shop had just arrived from London, and he was sent to acquaint her of

the fact. Then he was informed that she had left some hours since, and was probably miles away by this time; so the faithful little fellow returned to the bank; but, finding it closed, put the letter in his pocket, with the intention of restoring it to Hamilton when he should see him.

Eveleen had had no desire to visit her aunt. Though Y—— had but one attraction now, it was sufficiently powerful to bind her to the spot so long as that attraction remained. As for her father, she did not at all mind leaving him. His conduct towards her was become the conduct of a constantly irritable man. There was no longer companionship; no longer fellow-feeling between them; they mutually kept apart from each other; and when their meals, by which they were unavoidably brought into contact, were concluded, they would separate, Eveleen to her room or to the garden, and he to his sofa, or out into the town. It was a hard life for the poor girl. The name of Hamilton was rarely mentioned by De Courcy, and then only in terms of the most bitter and insulting kind. Such language Eveleen had at first resented; but she perceived that her opposition effected nothing more than to aggra-

vate her father: so she now never made any reply.

Besides the express command of her father that she should go to Henley, another inducement impelled her departure. She, who had hardly ever before been separated from her father, imagined that he might miss her in her absence; might, wanting the gentle face, the soft hand, the accustomed companion, relent towards her; alone, commune with himself upon her position, weighing the apparent desolation of her present existence until softer emotions might rise in his heart, and melt him to compassion, or incline him to her wishes.

So bidding adieu to her father, who coldly returned his farewell, she left the house; and, escorted to the coach by Miss Marriott, proceeded to Henley. Emotions happy and sad agitated her during the journey. She remembered that, but a few months before, such a trip as this had been projected in deceit; that it had been performed for a purpose upon which rested her whole happiness; and that, though that purpose had been attained, her happiness seemed more distantly removed from her now than it was then.

Her aunt had requested her to spend a fortnight at Henley; but at the expiration of a week she returned home. One supreme thought engrossed her mind, to the exclusion of everything and everybody. Her aunt's civility and attention were accepted as a matter of course; so much so, indeed, that the old lady sometimes grew indignant, and in secret informed an aged domestic that her neice, Miss Eveleen, was grown quite an altered person; that she appeared to be harassed by either the memory of a wrong or the pangs of a sorrow; and concluded by devoutly hoping so very unsociable a companion would speedily return whence she came. Nor was it long before her thoughts found an expression in her conduct. She grew surly and laconic in her replies; and so, at the end of the week, Eveleen, preferring of the two the lesser evil, returned home.

On her arrival she proceeded at once to her room, and having changed her costume, sallied forth into the garden. Her father had gone to London, the servant told her, but was expected back in an hour or so. She immediately repaired to the walk at the bottom of the grounds, and approached the gate leading into the meadow;

imagining that Hamilton might have secreted there a letter. It was now a fortnight since she had heard of or from him; and she longed to see his handwriting again. A moment's thought assured her of the folly of such a search; nevertheless she glanced keenly around her, routing amongst the shrubs and plants by the side of the hedge, and examining the dry ditch overgrown and concealed by the long grass. The passing hope was disappointed; and with a sigh she returned to the house.

At four o'clock her father returned. He was enveloped in a long greatcoat, and carried a huge carpet-bag in his hand, which he delivered to the servant, and then went up-stairs. He seemed much surprised to see his daughter, and embraced her with something more of warmth than had been his wont of late. A smile lighted up her face at this display of affection, and for a moment she imagined that her absence had been the cause. "What I anticipated," she thought, "has come to pass. He has missed me; and perhaps during his loneliness has learned to regret the past. Oh, if this should be so!"

"You are back earlier than I expected,"

said De Courcy. "Weren't you comfortable at Henley?"

"Yes: Aunt Godstone was very kind. But it was so dull."

"Why, Henley's one of the loveliest spots on the Thames! Surely you couldn't have found it dull in so short a time! You have only been gone a week."

"I prefer being at home: I am not always happy when away from it."

De Courcy's brow darkened, and he glanced at her suspiciously.

"Come, something more than dullness compelled your departure from Henley. What was it?"

This was said in his harsh manner again: and Eveleen's heart shrunk within her as she heard it.

"I am sorry that you should ascribe it to any other motive than what I have told you."

"But what have you told me?"

There was a pause.

"Henley was very dull."

"True: there was one attraction wanting!"

She glanced at her father, and perceived his eyes angrily fixed upon her.

"What do you mean?" she asked, falteringly. She knew his meaning well enough.

"Well, attraction or not, you won't be troubled with it again, I believe."

And so saying, he turned his back upon her, and walked towards the window.

Of course, he knew all about the affair of Hamilton. He had heard it the same night from the lips of the prosecutor, Murray himself. He had come to him late, with an agitated manner, and acquainted him with the whole transaction:—"A cheque of mine was forged, Mr. De Courcy: I had my suspicions, and proceeded at once to London, and acquainted the directors of the bank with them. One of them accompanied me here; and I instantly proceeded to the police office and laid information against the manager. He was taken in charge, and his rooms were searched; and in his dressing-case were found four cheques, two of mine and two of some other person's; and, what was worse, the bank-notes! What a scoundrel! He had actually locked up an innocent man, one of his clerks, for the very crime of which he himself was guilty. What a scoundrel!"

It would be hopeless to attempt to depict

Mr. De Courcy's amazement at this piece of information. For a long while he refused to give it credence; and not until Murray repeated the story, with many solemn assurances of its being the truth, did he attempt to consider it as a fact. When, however, no doubt remained in his mind, his first thoughts were of Eveleen.

"What will she say?" he asked.

Murray shrugged his shoulders,—a habit of his when he was at a loss for a reply.

"If she ever liked him, she will now loathe him," said De Courcy.

"Why?" said Murray.

"Oh, the change is so sudden: from apparent honour to the blackest villany. And women love the one, you know, and detest the other."

"I am not so sure of that," said Murray.

"Well, if my girl doesn't, she's not my daughter."

"It's a strange affair, isn't it?"

"Very! Poor man! now that he's done for —I suppose he'll be convicted?"

"Certain."

"A case of seven or fourteen years, I suppose?"

"One or the other."

"Well, now that he's done for, I'm inclined to pity him. It's foolish of me, I know. But I wish I hadn't been so hard upon him."

"If you hadn't he would have had your daughter —and what then?"

"Ay, you're right: what then? Infamy, sir,— the word infamy; and I should have hanged myself!"

"Well, well. I agree with you. You're a good-hearted man, De Courcy. He is to be pitied. Poor fellow!" and Murray sighed.

"And now, of course, Eveleen will have you, as there is no obstruction in the way. She'll be glad to turn to you; for honour is always refreshing after dishonour, eh, Murray?" and De Courcy smiled a hard smile. Did he suspect anything?

Murray shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, you must go in and win her now. We have all been playing the fool long enough."

"Yes, we have all been playing the fool long enough," said Murray.

Such, and a good deal more, was the conversation that ensued between these two gentlemen; and by-and-by De Courcy seemed to gladden over the news that had been communicated to

him. But when Murray left him, and he was seated alone in his room, with only the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece to disturb the silence, and with only his thoughts as a companion, his feelings assumed a sadder coloured hue. He began to reflect, and, in reflecting, reviewed the facts of the case as they had been detailed to him by Murray. Though everything was against Hamilton,—though De Courcy had no doubt whatever of his guilt,—still in his heart a small voice whispered to him that though Hamilton were a knave, yet Murray was a villain; though Hamilton merited transportation, Murray deserved hanging. Why? he could give no reply; but so said the inner voice; and who can stifle the whispers of our mysterious inward convictions?

Then his thoughts reverted to Eveleen. He knew not the effect such a communication might have upon her. Sometimes he thought like a father, and at others like a man. As a father, when he imagined that if she loved this man, such a blow might kill her,—and was she not his child? As a man, when he felt inclined to treat her love, if it could be called love, as the ephemeral sentiment of a school-girl; a light emotion

agitating for a moment her heart, to be replaced by the next that came. His blunt sensibilities had not the sharpness to penetrate a woman's heart; he had read of girls dying of love, and thought it a capital invention on the part of the writer to exaggerate the qualities of his heroine. But as to the possibility of its occurring in real life,—'twas bosh, sir, bosh: then spake the father, and whispered that were nature to prove capricious and establish a precedent for such a result of love in his child—what then? and then the man rose, and denounced such a supposition as ridiculous; and after a tussle the man came off victorious. In other words, Mr. De Courcy made up his mind to tell his daughter the fact plumply to her face on her return; and then, when the distress (if indeed there was to be distress) consequent upon such a communication had worn off, he would suggest to her the adoption of Murray as a partner, and presently, if she should discover any signs of opposition, enforce it.

Then there came another little struggle between the man and the father as to Murray's character. But then, of course, the father had the worst of it, because he argued only from sup-

position. He only supposed, only instinctively supposed, Murray to be a bad man; whereas the man indignantly repudiated such a wilful mode of reasoning, and, after much eloquence, clenched his arguments by recalling Murray's generosity in the case of the five thousand pounds. And, as if this speech contained some annihilating power, the father vanished, and for that week never ventured to show himself again.

But when the man had said to Eveleen, "Well, attraction or not, you won't be troubled with it again, I believe," before he could turn away the father had caught sight of the girl's face, and, checked perhaps by its expression from continuing what he had to say, suddenly twisted himself round and walked towards the window.

But she was at his side, with one hand upon his arm, looking imploringly into his face, and speaking quickly in a low, hurried voice. "What do you mean? has he left here? has he been called away? Answer me, O father, answer me! has he gone away?" The man turned to reply. But once again the father checked him; and Mr. De Courcy remained silent, drumming with his fingers upon the window-glass.

"Why are you silent? Is there bad news of

him? has anything happened to him? O answer me!"

"He is well, I believe," was the laconic reply.

"But he is not well; he cannot be well! you would not speak and look thus if all were well."

And in truth, Mr. De Courcy discovered a face, and addressed her in a voice equally agitated by the conflicting emotions, by the distress and the pride, by the father and the man, that fought so fiercely within him.

"What can it matter to you, if he is well or ill?"

"But tell me the truth—do answer me! I am sure something has occurred to him; my heart tells me so."

"Your heart!"

"Where is he?"

"Your heart?" The question was again put with an accent of well-feigned surprise.

And again came the question, "Where is he?"

"Come," said De Courcy, "this mutual cross-examination is growing ridiculous. I ask you, what is it to you where this man is?"

Eveleen bowed her head upon her breast,

and answered in a tremulous whisper, "I love him."

De Courcy knew this very well, and yet with a strange inconsistency he was surprised at it.

"Love him!" he cried; then seizing her by the arm, he led her to a seat and sat down opposite to her.

"I thought," he began sullenly, "that you had long since dismissed this foolish passion. However, we are all apt to be mistaken. But let me advise you to get rid of it at once, now."

He had made this speech to her once before;—on the morning when Hamilton had his interview with him. She was not alarmed by it, for such language as this had been expressed to her in his conduct ever since.

"Has he left Y——?" she cried.

"He has."

"Will he return?"

"I suspect not."

This was uttered energetically; but she half-smiled as she answered, "Yes, he will."

"Pshaw! how can you tell?"

"Believe me, he will return."

"I tell you it is highly improbable. Men who leave a place on such a charge do not always

contrive to return, though that charge sometimes proves false."

"What has he left for?"

"Have you not heard?"

Eveleen violently trembled, and gaspingly exclaimed, "No."

Should he tell her? Why not? It would be but a wrench, and the pain would soon be gone. Sooner or later she must hear it, and why not now?"

"Hamilton has proved himself a villain and a thief," he replied.

"It is false!" she shrieked, springing to her feet, and dashing the hair from her forehead. "It is false! false as the tongue that dare say it!"

Her father was surprised at this energy. But the ice was broken, and he would continue.

"False or not, in a few days he takes his trial at the Old Bailey for forgery and robbery."

She rushed at her father and grasped his arm tightly, almost painfully, with both hands. Then in a voice desperate in its calmness, she said, "Who says this?"

"I."

"And who else?"

"Never mind."

"Was it Murray?" The grasp grew tighter; and De Courcy raised his arm to disengage himself. But he made no reply.

"Was it Murray?"

"Yes, it was; there, now let go my arm."

She did so, dashing it from her, and bounding back with a loud cry. "It was he! I knew it! I felt it! it was he! but his aim is thwarted! Tell him to cease his wickedness—tell him he cannot have me—for I am Hamilton's wife!" She drew herself erect as she spoke, and stood for an instant motionless, confronting her father. Suddenly her face became ghastly; her form tottered; she uttered a faint sob, and fell prostrate into the arms of De Courcy, who seeing her situation had darted forward to catch her.

He placed her upon the sofa and hastily left the room for water. He dashed it into her face, and then stood by her side watching her with an expression terrible by the frown that had settled upon his forehead. Ever and anon he stooped to sprinkle water over her, then resumed his position with the frown unrelaxed. At last she uttered a sigh and opened her eyes, and glared wildly around her. "They have taken thee from

me," she murmured, stretching forth her arms, "but thou wilt come back to me my own, thou wilt come back to me." Her voice died away in a kind of musical sweetness, and she sobbed piteously.

There was no father by her side; now only the man stood there. "You have married him," he said, "you are his wife. Go and follow him."

She opened her eyes and fixed them upon his face with a doubtful look. "May I go?" she asked softly.

"Yes, but do not return to me."

There was a pause.

"You are not deceiving me? you are married to him?"

She raised her eyes devoutly to Heaven, and by that answer De Courcy was satisfied.

"Follow him! he is your husband. Go, claim the swindler before the world, but let us meet no more. You have deceived me,—you might have broken my heart! You cared not. Go! By the heaven above us you shall enter this house no more! Cleave to the scoundrel and forget your father, as he now forgets you!" And turning upon his heel he abruptly left the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRIAL.

How many days elapsed before the trial of Hamilton, at the Old Bailey, commenced, cannot be now ascertained; but on that eventful morning—eventful to more than him who was the most chiefly concerned—a grey atmosphere hung over and enveloped the city of London, from which came drizzling a thin, sooty rain, each drop of which seemed to have forgotten its properties as water, by making everything it touched greasy, unwholesome, and dirty. Those who thronged the court, impelled by curiosity or interest, had umbrellas that formed little pools beneath them, were enveloped in overcoats that sat damply upon their backs, and wore faces lined with the marks of the sooty rain which no patent obstruction could prevent from entering and befouling. A wretched morning it truly was; and everybody

said so to everybody else, and all agreed in the same remark.

Some time had to elapse before the chief event of the day could be discussed, argued, pronounced innocent or convicted; for a heap of minute cases were called on: the most unimportant of which were, of course, the most protracted and the most tedious. Once the mob was amused by a case in which an Irishman had to give evidence; and who, possibly conceiving his nationality to be a synonym for humour, delivered his sentiments in a manner that elicited much mirth and much hearty laughter, which two or three shrill-voiced men piercingly, though ineffectually, endeavoured to stifle.

At last Hamilton's case was called on; and when he entered a profound stillness fell upon the court; gravity sat with a frown upon all men's faces, and everybody said to himself, "Here he comes!"

Then the proceedings commenced.

Let not the reader imagine that I am going to weary him with the details of a trial at Newgate. I shall content myself by merely giving a brief synopsis of the case as it was reported on the following day:—

On Wednesday, the 29th of ——, 183—, Frank Hamilton, described as manager of the Branch Bank of the United British Banking Company at Y——, was placed upon his trial at the Central Criminal Court, upon the charges of forgery and robbery.

The evidence in support of the prosecution was of the most damnatory nature. It consisted of the discovery of four cheques bearing severally the signatures of three clients of the bank, together with six banknotes amounting to the sum of four hundred pounds, of which the bank a few days previous to the discovery of the forgery was robbed. The whole found in the prisoner's possession, secreted in his dressing-case.

The prisoner, on being placed at the bar, discovered some emotion at finding himself confronted by so large a body of spectators. He ran his eye with a searching look over the multitude, and not seeing the person for whom he apparently sought, appeared much relieved, and fixed his eyes upon the countenance of the judge, Mr. Baron ———, from where he rarely afterwards removed them.

Mr. Tomlins having opened the case,

Mr. Quodman proceeded to state the principal

facts to the jury. He dwelt eloquently upon the dreadful position the accused, who was a young man, then occupied. Of the crime with which the prisoner was charged, the results were such as to sap the very foundations of all social and commercial intercourse; to lessen that confidence between man and man by which alone society is upheld and commerce supported; to throw doubt upon the innocent, and by provoking a wide suspicion, endanger alike that character of integrity and probability of success by which mankind are first led to choose a profession, and next incited to pursue it with ardour. A case of a nature so important, he felt confident, possessed interest enough to secure the profoundest attention of the jury, without occasion on his part for enforcing upon them the necessity of a patient hearing to arrive at an impartial verdict. He then proceeded into the details of the evidence already known to the reader, and concluded with the reiterated hope of the impartiality and good sense to be displayed by the jury.

The evidence was then entered into at length; Mr. William Murray, Mr. Nathaniel Sloman, and Mr. Alfred Gamyn being the chief witnesses for the prosecution. They were each subjected to a

severe cross-examination from the learned counsel on behalf of the prisoner, but with little effect in impugning their evidence.

The prisoner was next called on for his defence; the summons appeared to arouse him from a reverie, for though his gaze was fixed upon the countenance of the judge, he started and otherwise displayed signs of forgetfulness. On the summons being repeated, he glanced calmly around him, especially keeping his eyes fixed upon the features of Mr. Murray. Then drawing himself up to his full length, he commenced his defence.

It would be impossible to do justice by mere repetition to the extraordinary eloquence, self-control, and strong good sense that characterised his delivery. During the time of his speech, which occupied nearly three-quarters of an hour, not a sound was heard throughout the court. Every eye was riveted upon the intelligent and handsome features of the prisoner, and when he concluded the peroration of one of the most eloquent speeches ever offered in the defence of imputed guilt, a murmur rose from the throng below, and several hands, in defiance of all rules, loudly clapped their owners' admiration.

The pith of this speech might be condensed into four words: that he was innocent. In spite of the damnatory nature of the evidence adduced, such was the beauty of his delivery, such the exquisite modulation of his voice, the felicity of his choice of words, the animated expression of his countenance; above all, the perfect self-possession that conspired more than the whole to render his language effective and convincing; that even those who, before his defence were perfectly satisfied with his guilt, found themselves suddenly as warm in their conviction of his innocence.

The judge then proceeded to recapitulate the evidence to the jury, first urging upon them the necessity of considering the pure evidence alone, without suffering themselves to be influenced by any other emotions than a keen desire to penetrate and arrive at the truth. He then proceeded through the evidence with great labour of minuteness, dwelling especially upon such points as might assist the jury in arriving at a conclusion. He elaborated the evidence with great ingenuity of diction and much solemnity of manner, though throughout the charge it was

apparent to all that his opinion was inimical to the prisoner.

At a quarter to six the jury retired to consider their verdict, and the prisoner was removed from the bar, and taken out of the court. The interval between the absence and return of the jury was marked by great anxiety on the part of those assembled at the court; many expressing dissimilar opinions, and some secretly wagering upon the subject.

At five minutes to six the jury re-entered the court, and the buzz that had preceded their return, subsided at once into a profound stillness.

Then the prisoner was re-introduced and placed at the bar. Though every eye was upon him, he stood collected, though pale. His arms were crossed upon his breast, and his demeanour was expressive of resignation and repose.

Immediately after, the names of the jury were called over, and on being asked if they were agreed in the verdict, they replied in the affirmative.

The question was then put to the prisoner, and shortly after the jury pronounced him Guilty.

There was a death-like silence in the court. The prisoner still stood with his arms folded, motionless.

The recorder then summed up. It was a mere repetition of what had been before said, and the punishment was, that, on account of the heinousness of the crime, aggravated by the narrow escape of an innocent youth (Sloman), who had suffered already the restraint of imprisonment, the prisoner should be sentenced to transportation for a term of seven years.

Scarcely had the words been pronounced, when a terrible shriek rang through the court. So piercing, so agonizing, was the sound, that an instant dismay seized the whole assembly. The prisoner was observed to gaze, with hands clutching the rail and with dilated eyes, in the direction whence proceeded the cry. There was a movement amongst the throng, and soon after the insensible form of a female, closely veiled, was lifted up and carried out of the court. At the same moment the prisoner raised his hands to Heaven, then pressing them to his eyes, fell into the arms of the gaoler, who conducted him, swooning, back to his cell.

Such, briefly, was this trial which had occupied

the greater portion of the day, and which had excited an amount of attention almost unparalleled in an age when forgery and robbery were events of constant occurrence, and when murder was treated as a severe matter of course.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT SEA.

It was a squally day in the English Channel. The sea ran high, and the wind came rushing down from the south-west in violent fits, bearing fresh as well as salt water into the faces of those who had the temerity to face the elements. The sun was climbing the heavens, but shining thickly through the wild scud that swept across it: as if the sky were trying to imitate the foam of the sea that leaped so savagely below. In the Downs numerous ships were at anchor, resolved, before too late, to ride out the gale that promised to be upon them before sunset. It was a fair wind, however, for the homeward-bound ships, and these seemed resolved to profit as much as they could by the treacherous wind which even now would veer eastwardly in gusts, compelling them ever and anon to "brace up" and shorten sail.

Most of the outward-bounders on this day had brought up in the Downs; and the old mariners who stalked about the sea-coast from Margate to Deal, expected that they would all do the same thing. But in this they were mistaken.

It was remarked at Margate that one ship had been tacking a great number of times; for no sooner were the yards trimmed and the vessel leaving a wake behind her, than through the telescope could be discerned the two men at the helm, running the wheel vigorously down, until the sails were all aback, and the vessel's head slowly brought round again. These constant manœuvrings amused those on shore very much to witness. A great number of telescopes were levelled at the ship, and constant inquiries were put to the signalsman as to her name. The reply was, "The Light of the Age, sir;" then, "Where is she bound to?" Answer, "To Sydney." "Is she a merchantman?" "Yes; chartered for convicts." "Oh! how do you know all this?" "Don't you see them colours flying at the peak?" "Yes." "Well, that's her name." "Oh!" And after another good stare at the ship, a stare considerably prolonged by curiosity now it was known that she was a con-

vict ship, people went away saying "Thank Heaven, we're not aboard her, eh?"

The signalsman who was clad in blue smalls and a tarpaulin shiny hat, would say to a mate, "I say, Bill, that there ship's a working her hands a few, ain't she?" and then the reply would come, "I guess she is; do you think she'll bring up?" "Not she; she's for Portsmouth, and she'll make it to-night if she's sharp round the Foreland. There ain't no bringing up with her, I'll bet. I know the ship well, and the skipper too. I sailed under him when he was chief mate of the 'Hargus,' and a rum'n he is too. Devil a bit will anythink stop him short of a hurricane. He'll carry on till all's blue!"

In all which this speaker proved himself correct. For first of all she was "carrying on" now immensely; that is to say, she was crowded with an amount of canvas that not many other ships so situated would willingly have shown; and secondly, after innumerable tacks, she at last succeeded in getting well to windward of the North Foreland, when, slackening her lee-braces, she made herself a free wind, and commenced bowling down channel with a wake behind her that showed pretty well her rate of sailing.

The "Light of the Age" was a long, black ship, built evidently with a view to speed. Her masts were lofty and tapering, and her yards overhung her sides by a great distance. Thus she had a very wide spread of canvas; so much so, indeed, that when all her sails were set, it appeared amazing to a landsman how so narrow a basis could support with safety so towering and heavy a cloud above.

She was bound now to Portsmouth to embark convicts; then she was to proceed to Sydney, New South Wales. True to the signalsman's predictions, she hauled in alongside the Quay at a quarter to eight on the same day; and added a few more beings to swell for that night the unwholesome orgies of Portsmouth, to overrun her streets and disturb the peace, and to render to the landsman more emphatic the fact, that a sailor is only a man when he is at sea, since on shore it is difficult to conceive him in any other light than as a continually intoxicated animal.

At a quarter past six on the following morning the convicts were embarked, together with a guard of twenty soldiers under the command of a lieutenant. Then it was the custom to chain these offspring of villany together in pairs,

perhaps to incapacitate them from any design of mutiny, or perhaps to render their punishment more ignominious.

In twos and twos they came on board, the lieutenant and two sentries at the gangway to meet them, and to escort them to their wooden and restless prison of three, perhaps of four months.

A curious sight it was to watch the countenances of these men. Some seemed to have faces formed only by nature to receive the stamp of villany: for there it appeared as legible as the impress of a seal upon the yielding wax. Some had their heads bowed, not in shame but in surliness. When these looked up they disclosed features hairy, fierce and malignant. Others were young, with smooth and rosy cheeks, and eyes that promised an undeveloped intelligence. They walked with an elastic tread, and boldly returned the glance that met them. An air of conscious innocence, of wounded dignity, of injured manhood, lurked about them. Yet strange to tell, of all, these were the most hardened scoundrels; murderers in heart with the blood of the attempted murder fresh upon them; or with the crime that ruined honesty, that with-

held bread from starving children, that desolated the industrious household, bright in their memory, that seemed as incense to the soul to gratify its crime-thirsting nature by retrospection, since evil was now withheld from them. Here were sons over which mothers had prayed and smiled; for whom fathers had anticipated wealth, honour, position. Here were orphans driven to desperation by want; ignorant of all save that they had been hungry, and that they wanted bread. Here were the remains of ruined honesty, with eyes seeking the ground in shame, with hearts agonized by their past career and present fate, with thoughts always away—back to those days when the smile of heaven and earth had filled their souls with joy, and when the frown was not recked of—was away, oh! how far away.

And chained to a young man shorter, though with a frame compact and displaying great power, here was Hamilton.

In twos and twos they came on board, and at a quarter to seven they were all below, guarded by four sentries at the hatchway with loaded muskets and bayonets at the side. Then the ship hauled off, and with a fair breeze stood once more out into the channel.

The "'tween decks" where the convicts were stowed, had a close and sickening smell for the first week. The men, who were not exempt because they were criminals from those sufferings which are the usual concomitants of a first trip to sea, lay on their backs in all the agonies of sea-sickness. Many were brought on deck, the captain and lieutenant imagining that the fresh air might help to relieve them. They suffered themselves to be carried like infants by the sturdy seamen; and when on deck they remained on their backs without offering to stir, execrating the elements and the cruelty of the law in language more easily imagined than described. Your villain may be a Hercules, moral and physical, proof against everything; but I'll warrant old Neptune to subdue him: at any rate to keep him quiet!

The sailors for that week had a hard time of it. Mops and buckets were in constant request; and I am not sure that the expressions of these mariners did not sometimes equal in acerbity the language of the convicts.

People ashore, who run down to the sea-side and take a peep at the ocean, imagine that a sailor's life must be greatly monotonous; that there is nothing else but sea and sky to look at:

and then, say they, "we all know how tiresome they become after a time."

I am loath to oppose a contradiction to a position apparently so irrefutable; but it is a curious fact that so far from being monotonous, a sea-voyage is extremely entertaining; almost never is one day like another; and the very ignorance of what may occur to-morrow, renders to-day more agreeable by the spice of anticipatory doubt. The morning that opened so peacefully may be followed by an evening of storm. The shrill whistle of the boatswain that summons now "all hands" to make sail, in a few hours shall, perhaps, be heard re-echoing with an entirely different meaning. Then comes the excitement. The ship is on her beam-ends, or before the wind with her canvas bellying out before her; and her stem tearing into glittering foam the swelling wave that rolls away beneath. Men are up in the rigging, or out upon the yards seizing and reefing or furling the sail that flaps thunderingly against the mast. The captain, or officer in command, with one hand clutches the rail, whilst with the other he signals his command to the helmsman, who with eyes sometimes aloft, sometimes on the needle, sometimes on the cap-

tain, holds the vessel to her course with a skill to which the arrow-like path of the ship, traced behind, more than sufficiently testifies. And above all, you hear rising the single voice and then the chorus of men pulling at the ropes about the deck, whilst now this sail goes up or that one down; this yard slowly rises, or with a roar and a crash rushingly descends. Now and again shrieks the boatswain's whistle, and often may be heard the cry of "Belay, there!" hoarsely thundered through the speaking-trumpet, or from the equally noisy lungs of the commander. Then the ship is snugged, and merrily she goes dancing over the waves, wild as the elements themselves that leap and roar around her in her path. Or the still beauty of a tropical night! when the full moon looks down from a star-dotted sky on an ocean smiling in its sleep; when the waters disturbed by the lazy roll of the slumbering ship, play in liquid fire about her; when may be seen darting around her bows, the dolphin; or swimming stealthily by her side, the shark; each revealing its presence by the phosphorescent sparkle that accompanies its movements; above, the cloudless, dark-blue sky, variegated by a million diamond-stars, or enlivened by the rapid

and evanescent blaze of the meteor; below, the ocean, breathing from its silence the faint, the dream-like melody that so sweetly fills the air around; breathing from its mighty bosom peace, silence, beauty, religion! The sailor's life monotonous! Ye who say that, know not the sea.

There was a rumour at starting that the "Light of the Age" designed calling in at the Cape for water. The captain, however, finding the supply still abundant, resolved not to lose time by such a visit. The cargo he had on board it was desirable to land as soon as possible; for seamen, as a rule, are not devoted to the freight of crime, and are willing to get rid of it as speedily as they can. So, in order that no approximation to the land might tempt his officers or men to solicit him to give them a night or two ashore, the captain kept away south a long distance, far beyond indeed the usual track; making it his plea that he was going to adopt what is called in navigation, "Great Circle Sailing." And presently all hands began to feel it grow unpleasantly cold.

The convicts were in the habit of being brought up in batches to smell the fresh air, each batch,

as it made its appearance on deck, being guarded by a few soldiers with loaded guns.

It fell to the lot of such a batch, of which Hamilton formed one, to come upon deck one day remarkable for its coldness. But this, so far from being objected to by the convicts, they found delicious; the keen, biting air, after the frowzy smell of the cabins, was a positive delicacy; they found the colour return to their cheeks, and their health, broken by the heat of the tropics united to their confinement, invigorated and restored.

On this particular day, and just as Hamilton's batch made its appearance on deck, there came on a heavy snow-storm, and many of the convicts requested to be sent below again. Their desire was complied with, and they soon all disappeared, Hamilton and his companion, to whom he was linked, alone remaining. These two the soldiers were for having below also, but they implored so earnestly to remain that in consideration of the uniformity of the good conduct of one (Hamilton) they had permission granted them. So they got to leeward of the cook's galley (which is placed in the fore-part of the ship, and which, by reason of the heated oven within, exhales generally a warm

air), and there resolved to remain until the storm was over, or their turn upon deck was expired. A sentry stood over them.

The ship was running before a strong westerly gale; four men were stationed on the look-out—two on the forecastle, and two in the fore-top. These precautions were taken on account of the ship being considered in the neighbourhood of ice; for at noon on the preceding day they sighted six large icebergs on the lee-bow, and on the same night they had run accidentally alongside one, almost within a biscuit's throw. The captain was evidently anxious. It was now snowing so heavily that the sea a ship's length a-head could hardly be seen. Ever and anon the officer on watch would shout, "Keep a sharp look-out for'ard, my men!" and the answer came through the snow, "Ay, ay, sir!" This had lasted now a quarter of an hour, and the captain's anxiety was visibly growing more intense. At last he gave some order to the mate, who went forward, and shortly after the boatswain piped "All hands, shorten sail and trim ship." In an instant all was bustle and excitement. Ropes went flying, sails banging, and men singing and running about. Amidst this tumult the captain's deep,

clear voice could be heard shouting to the steersman, "Keep her due north! steady—so! How's her head?" "North a quarter east, sir." "Due north, my man! up with your helm!" And due north she was kept. Evidently the captain felt that he had gone too far south.

The ship's course was regulated, and the seamen returned to their sleep, their meals, or their occupation of mending their clothes, from which they had been disturbed by the boatswain's cry. The snow still fell heavily; it seemed, indeed, to have increased, and the captain leant over the rail of the poop with the word "danger" legibly engraven on his face.

The alteration of the ship's course had brought the wind on the beam,—a favourable point of sailing; and though the "Light of the Age" showed but little canvas, she was bending to the blast and careering through the seas at the rate of ten knots an hour.

The two convicts in the meanwhile had remained where they were, the sentinel still beside them.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon. The thick snow clouds that canopied the sky seemed also to shut out the light; and what wild rays

they suffered to escape them were dulled and obscured by the heavy snow that fell. One of the officers recommended the captain to "heave the ship to;" that is, to put her under bare poles, merely showing a patch of canvas to keep her steady, and wait until the snow should pass away. But the captain, though conscious of danger, thought he was pursuing the right course in steering the vessel towards a warmer climate; and so on they went, shipping large seas, and dashing through the waves and the storm like "a thing of life."

Suddenly a hoarse voice cried something from the foretop; the shout was instantly taken up by the men on the forecastle, and aft came the loud and awful cry, "Ice right ahead!"

The captain had seen it. In an instant he was tearing towards the steersman, shrieking, "Hard up! hard up!" and grasping the wheel himself dashed it over with all his might.

Too late! On went the ship, dashing on to the frowning mass that right before her seemed to have suddenly risen from the deep, and in an instant she had rushed headlong into it, crushing her bowsprit and her bows like tinder as they came in contact with the massive side of the berg,

and hurling everybody on his back or face by the sheer strength of the appalling shock.

There was an instantaneous rush to the boats. One was hurriedly lowered, and capsized the instant it touched the water, the shrieks of its drowning inmates rising above the hideous din on board. Another was tried, but met with the same fate. Then the men in a body suddenly rushed aft, and stood in groups near the taffrail, loudly cursing the captain for his folly, then folding their arms and preparing in silence for their fate.

But the most hideous scene was with the convicts. These wretches were all below at the time of the catastrophe, guarded as usual by the four sentinels, who in their thick cloaks kept watch near the hatchway. At the first shock the lieutenant had rushed from the cabin, imagining that a mutiny might have occurred; but seeing how matters stood, and comprehending or imagining the necessity of subordination at such a moment, he hurriedly gave orders not to suffer the convicts to come upon deck, and to fire upon those who should transgress these orders.

Fear lest the sudden rush of these ferocious men, who in such a scene might take vengeance upon their gaolers, knowing perhaps, deliverance

to be impossible, might possibly have urged him to this course. And too fearfully was he obeyed. The convicts intuitively guessing the danger of the ship, clamoured, yelled to be delivered, whilst the soldiers, faithful to their duty, threatened to shoot the first man who should attempt his escape. These threats were disregarded; several hands grasped the edge of the hatch, and were pricked off by the bayonets of the sentinels; till two, more daring, clambered on the backs of their associates, and would have gained the deck, but were instantly shot by the sentinels. Throwing up their arms, with a terrible shriek, they fell back dead together—for they were chained to each other—on to the lower deck.

Then ensued a scene that baffles all description. Oaths, shrieks, cries for assistance, pathetic and heart-rending supplications arose from the seething mass below, who, as they ventured to gain the deck, were shot or bayoneted by the intrepid though remorseless soldiers. No one interfered to check this frightful slaughter. Each man was too much occupied with the thought of himself, to think or care for the sufferings of others.

From the time the ship struck to the present

moment five minutes had elapsed. During this while she had been rapidly settling at the head. So rapidly, indeed, that terror had compelled numbers of the unhappy wretches to hasten their death by leaping overboard. The captain still stood near the rail of the poop, his hair streaming in the wind, surrounded by his officers and some men. Not a word was spoken. Each man read the sentiments of the other in the faces around; and thus with a tremble, as if the brave ship herself participated in the general agony of the moment, she paused; her bows were lifted for an instant high up by a great wave that had recoiled from the side of the iceberg, and then amidst the shriek of the blast, and wilder shriek of the unhappy sufferers, she went head-foremost down, like an iron bar dropped long-wise into the water, with all her living freight of crime and of honesty.

CHAPTER XV.

ON AN ICEBERG.

NATURE, when she has completed her work of destruction, will sometimes relax her frown and smile. Hardly had the ship foundered, when the snow-storm ceased; the wind lulled, and through a rift in the clouds the sun shone forth with a cold glare, illumining the weird scene below.

With the exception of one or two pieces of spar and broken wreck, nothing else remained of the ill-fated "Light of the Age." With her the angry waters seemed to have engulphed all that had belonged to her, and the sea leaped over her tomb, exulting in its malice amidst froth and hisses. But though no eye perceived them, save the wild albatross, who soared majestically above them, or that sparrow of the deep, the stormy petrel, poising itself upon the edge of the breaking wave; two dark spots there were, rising and falling with the roll of the seas, battling on in

the direction of the towering iceberg that lay ahead of them some forty feet distant.

There were two men swimming.

They remained close together, though between them there was sufficient room for the free exercise of their arms, and it appeared that this contact mutually assisted them; for sometimes the broad chest of one would rise high out of the water, elevated by the powerful strokes of the arms; and when he rose thus the other would follow also.

They were swimming in the direction of a beach of ice that sloped gradually from the water's brink to many fathoms below it. Covered as it was with sea-moss and tangle, it afforded an easy landing place, and this the swimmers were making vigorous strokes to attain. Sometimes they approached it within a few feet, carried forward by a high wave, which, rushing up the steep, recoiled again with a loud noise, bearing the two black spots far back again—always together. Once their feet touched the plain of ice beneath them, and they dashed on, hoping to escape the towering wave that followed them behind, or resist its strength by grasping the sea-weed before them. But without effect; for the

wave leaped around and over them with irresistible force, and when next they emerged from the foam of the sea, they found the iceberg some distance ahead of them again.

But at last they reached it. Half-drowned, and almost breathless and spent by this terrible conflict with the elements, these two men suddenly found themselves raised high aloft on the singing crest of an immense wave, and propelled towards the iceberg with incredible speed. An almost certain death now awaited them; for since the sea could not strangle them, it seemed determined to dash out their brains. On they went with closed eyes, awaiting their doom. Their hands were useless, and, consequently, inactive. The same force that carried them on buoyed them up, and in a few minutes it had hurled them far up on the envious beach, itself going yet higher, bursting in mighty flakes of foam against the wall of ice, and hurling itself high aloft, almost as high as the berg itself.

Then it came rushing back, trying to tear the two men from the support which they had found in grasping the sea-weed. But this time to no purpose. Desperation lent them the vigour of giants, and prone on their faces they clung to

their holding-place, looking like huge sea-leeches on a green floor.

One, however, seemed stronger than the other; for as the last of the wave, a green world of water, swept over them, the hold of the latter of the two relaxed, and he was suddenly hurled round, and at the same moment something that connected them at the feet snapped. Then came a pause. The first one raised himself up, and glanced fearfully about him. A few yards below him lay his companion. He shouted to him, and the man raised his head. Then seeing the other on his feet he got up also. The two commenced staggering up the beach, sometimes slipping and falling, until they reached a shelter beneath a solid rock of ice; here they both sunk down by the side of each other, breathing hard through their clenched teeth, and evincing symptoms of the most complete exhaustion.

A terrible spectacle did these poor wretches present. Their hair was matted, and hung wildly about their faces. The ends of their fingers were white—not pale, but white as the snow—that bloodless white which is apparent in men who have been a long time in the water. Their

faces had also the same appearance. They wore the convict dress, and each had, clasped around his ankle, an iron ring, from which depended a few links of a chain. Their countenances were marked with an expression of great suffering; but now they slumbered, heavily—so heavily that, but for the breath that came hissing through their clenched teeth, you would have thought them dead.

The weather had now cleared up. The sun shone with brilliance, though with but little warmth; the wind had lulled—lulled at least in comparison with the gale that had been previously blowing—and the sea was slowly presenting a less agitated appearance.

The two convicts had sheltered themselves beneath a huge block of ice, like a boulder-stone; here, completely screened from the piercing wind, they felt almost warm. What sun there was shone full upon them, and helped to dry their clothes of something of the salt water with which they were saturated.

It is a mistake to suppose that an iceberg is always unendurably cold. When the weather is calm the temperature is no worse than that of a February day in England. This happens as

far as 54° latitude south; each degree after this the cold, of course, grows more insupportable. The writer of this has been, when rounding Cape Horn, in latitude 66° south, in weather so mild and genial, that the use of an overcoat has been unnecessary. And this, too, with upwards of sixty icebergs around him on the horizon. The cold of the Antarctic seems not so biting as that of the Arctic circle. Why this should be, I know not; but most sailors are well aware of the fact.

For three hours the two men remained motionless. At last the shorter of the two grew restless. He tossed his arms wildly out, as if in the act of swimming, and the movement awakened him. He remained still, however, with his eyes wide open, looking apparently in astonishment at the vast block of ice that hung so threateningly over him. Then he suddenly leaped to his feet.

The sun was sinking in the west; the snowstorm had long since passed away, and along the sky were large masses of clouds hurriedly careering on their way towards the east. The ocean was turbulent, and wore a savage aspect; its waves were crested with foam, broken and

scattered by the wind that still blew with violence. Now and then a monster wave would hurl itself against the western side of the berg, with a violence that made the mountain of ice tremble to the shock; then, leaping high in the air, fall with a roar like a cataract back again into the water. Many birds were wheeling steadily around or near the iceberg, and sometimes one of them would approach and disappear in a fissure or beneath a ledge.

The man glanced for a moment wildly about him, then stooped and shook his companion.

"Come, rouse up! do you know where we are?"

The man, thus accosted, woke with a start, and sat up, rubbing his eyes. Then suddenly he began to tremble, and his teeth chattered in his head.

"It is cold," he said.

"Get on your legs, and do as I'm doing;" and the speaker commenced violently flapping his arms to and fro upon his breast.

"I do not see any signs of the wreck."

"No; they're all at the bottom. Pity we ain't there too, I think."

"What a miraculous escape we have had!"

There was a slight pause. "I am hungry," said the shorter convict.

"So am I."

"There ain't nothing to eat," continued the shorter convict, looking around. "We've only been pitched on here to die of famishing or cold."

The tall convict made no reply; but shading his eyes with his hand gazed earnestly around the horizon, commencing it at one quarter, and circling it until the side of the iceberg interrupted his view. It was now growing dark.

"There's no sail in sight," he said, "and so we must try and live till to-morrow, when perhaps we may be rescued."

"Where shall we sleep?"

"Where we slept before. It's sheltered there; and—how cold it is!" His teeth were violently chattering together, and his whole frame was shaking as if smitten with palsy.

"We must lie close together," said his companion; "we'll keep each other warm so. How are your clothes?"

"Wet."

"Very?"

"No; but damp. And your's?

"They seem to be getting dry; the sun's been on 'em I suspect, and the wind has helped it."

"Let us go and lie down. If you find me dead by your side in the morning, throw me into the water. I will do the same to you." Then they returned to their resting-place. As the shorter convict threw himself down on his icy bed, he exclaimed, "Hallo! the chain's broke. I never noticed it before."

The other looked at his foot, and for the first time remarked that at each movement of his legs, the links of a broken chain clanked behind it. But he said nothing. His mind was occupied too much by the horror of his situation to pay any attention to, or remark with the least satisfaction, a fact of which the occurrence at any other time he would have hailed as an omen of liberty.

He laid down by the side of his companion, and threw his arms around him. Then they linked their legs together, and huddled thus in a heap, they endeavoured to snatch a few hours' repose. Fortunately for them, the nook in which they lay was a wide though shallow fissure, crowned at the height of some ten feet by a ledge

of ice thirteen feet deep, which gradually shelved until it met the solid wall above. It presented the spectacle of a cave, and completely excluded from its inmates the wind that blew from the west. Its floor was covered with a slimy moss, that grew thicker as it sloped down the beach, where it became mingled with long pieces of sea-weed, that could be seen waving some feet below the water's edge.

In this cave the two men remained the whole night. At intervals they would rise and beat their hands and arms about them, stamping their feet, so as to restore circulation. Then they would lie down again and enfold each other, and remain thus, until the cold once more compelled them into violent exercise.

Morning broke; and half benumbed, the two poor wretches hailed with joy the faint streaks of light that gradually illumined the eastern heaven. The wind had subsided almost into a calm; the waves were still agitated, and thundered restlessly against the sides of the iceberg; but the sky was clear, and as the taller convict looked up he gave promise to his companion of a fine day.

"I am hungry," was all the reply.

"Break some pieces of ice from that corner, and suck them. They will relieve you."

The man took off his boot, and violently struck the edge of the wall. The heel was bound in a rim of iron like a horse-shoe, and thanks to this and the vigour of the striker's blows, several large pieces of ice were detached, which the two men eagerly collected and commenced to suck. The taste was salt, but not bitter; and the two parched mouths chewed the frozen lumps with all the eagerness of thirst.

The sun now slowly rose above the horizon, and shone with a cold though cheerful ray upon the troubled, streaky waters that rose and fell far as the eye could see.

Suddenly the tall convict uttered an exclamation, and pointed to something in the air.

"Did you see that?" he cried.

"What?"

"That bird?"

"Yes; I see it. You mean that grey fellow, swooping now over that big wave?"

"Ay; but did you notice where it came from?"

"No."

The tall convict pointed to a part of the ice-

berg which seemed full of scars and seams. "If," he said, "we could only get up there we should find food enough, I know. All those crevices hold birds and eggs."

His companion gave him a hungry stare, and said, "Can't we try it?"

He was a short, powerfully-built young fellow, with a thick neck, and a low forehead. As he spoke he made a step in the direction of the steep of ice indicated to him by his companion.

"It is impossible," said the tall convict; "it is inaccessible. No man could climb it."

The height, however, was not great, though from where they stood it looked so. Moreover, it appeared inaccessible by reason of the smoothness of the side that was turned towards them.

"Well, we'd better break our necks at once, and get it over, than go on starving here with plenty before us," said the shorter convict, doggedly. "I shall try it, anyhow."

"It is madness, man!" exclaimed his companion, grasping his arm. "You'll never be able to climb it."

The convict paused, and looked up. Then releasing himself from the other's grasp, he commenced violently flapping his arms across his

breast, and breathing into his hands, of which the fingers were curled and stiff with the cold.

"We must have food," he muttered; "I am dying with hunger." And he walked towards a projecting crag upon which he leaped, and thence jumped on to a ledge overhanging the sea, which rolled directly beneath, and running along it, entered and proceeded to climb a long fissure, which was not apparent from their former position; but which ascended like a gutter or a spout up a moderately steep incline. So far the ascent had been easy; but this miniature ravine ended abruptly near the summit of the slope, which was on either side a smooth plain of ice; to gain a narrow plateau that led to the next height, some short distance up which were the crevices and supposititious birds, was an undertaking of such difficulty as would have deterred any man from attempting it, who was impelled by a stimulus less powerful than that of violent hunger.

The convict remained crouching where he was, looking about him. His companion stood breathlessly watching this brave and perilous ascent from below. The climber seemed meditating; then he looked behind him and downwards. He

was now a considerable height from the level of the sea; and though the elevation was not very great, it appeared sufficiently so to daunt him for a moment: for to his companion, who was watching him, he seemed to hesitate. But an imperious hunger urged him on, and bracing himself up for a fresh effort, he prepared once more to climb.

The miniature ravine, I have said, ended abruptly near the summit of the slope. Between its termination and the top of the plateau there was a distance of five or six feet. Here a slight indent afforded a resting-place for the feet; and to plant himself upon this, so as to be able to grasp the top, and swing himself over, was evidently the convict's intention. Placing his elbows upon the resting-place offered him by this indent, with a violent effort he succeeded in drawing himself up. But just as his knees touched this support, finding himself to be too short to reach the plateau he had hoped to gain, the dangerous position he occupied turned him giddy. He grasped the smooth surface of the ice-wall to support himself; but the motion being too sudden, his knees slipped off the narrow indent: instead of his falling back into the

crevice, which might have impeded his fall, he darted off at a slight angle from the line of his ascent, and in a moment found himself slowly sliding down the glass-like surface of the incline, in the direction of the narrow ledge that he had at first traversed towards the ravine. His companion watched him in a state of agonised horror. The doomed man's face was livid with terror; his hands were extended before him, clutching, vainly clutching, the smooth surface down which he was now proceeding with increased velocity. On he went, and his horror-stricken companion below prayed aloud that the narrow ledge might catch him—but in vain. The most frightful shrieks burst from the lips of the wretched man, as he found his attempts to impede the rapidity of his descent useless. Blood was starting from his fingers' ends, from the violence with which he sought to drive his nails into the iron surface of the ice. His feet were closed together, and onwards he went, each moment increasing his speed, until, like a flash of light, he darted sheer over the ledge, and fell into the foaming sea below, with a howl of despair that sounded high above the wind and the waves; and that sent a thrill of agony through his companion,

who, seeing the hopelessness of the dying man's position, had buried his face in his hands to shut out the hideous sight.

The convict, after a pause, raised his eyes and looked upon the sea. Once, amidst the foam, he fancied he saw the blackened features of his companion; but the phantom vanished, and the wind and the waves went on with their ceaseless dirge, heedless of the agony of the drowning man below, heedless of the agony of the weeping wretch above.

* * * * * *

Some months after this, the following extracts, from the log-book of the "Childe Harold" whaler, were copied into the English papers; and by the singularity of the incident they detailed, commanded, for a while, a considerable attention:—

"May 16th. Lat. 52° 12′ 19″ S. Long. 22° 13′ E. Wind fresh and squally. Sighted several icebergs on the starboard bow. At noon, wind lulled; shook reefs out, and set fore-topmast stunsail. At half-past two, iceberg right ahead. Steered towards it, intending to make it to leeward. On inspecting it through a telescope, I (viz., the captain) perceived something black extended at length upon a kind of beach that

sloped on one side down to the water level. Thought it a bear. The sea being smooth, hauled up the mainsail, backed the foreyards, and lowered port cutter, which I manned with six hands, getting into it myself with a rifle. In half an hour we were close on to the iceberg, and on looking through my glass again at the black object, discovered it to be a man. We halloed to him, but he made no reply. He was lying on his breast, with face hidden in his arm. We rowed alongside the beach; the surf rather heavy. One of the hands jumped out, and held the boat steady by the painter.* I followed, accompanied by two of the crew; and on reaching the spot where he lay, gave orders to turn him gently over. His face was white, and seemed frozen; his arms and legs were stiff, and we thought him a corpse. His left ankle was encircled by an iron ring, from which hung a few links of a chain that seemed to have been broken. We carried him down to the boat, and rowed him on board ship. Handed him over to surgeon, who wrapped him in blankets, and poured brandy down his throat. Said life was not extinct. He remained without evincing any signs of vitality for

* A small rope attached to the front part of the boat.

an hour, the surgeon and chief-mate chafing his body all over continually. At last he heaved a sigh and opened his eyes. He glanced, with a wild and frightful stare, around him; then suddenly seized the surgeon by the arm and attempted to speak. His lips moved, but there was no articulation. The surgeon told him, in English, to remain quiet. The man seemed to understand him, for he faintly smiled, then closed his eyes and fell into a profound slumber, from which the surgeon said it was a chance if he ever woke again. He was dressed curiously. His clothes were torn, and the colour seemed to have been half obliterated by long exposure to, or immersion in, salt water. The chain on his foot puzzled us. It was padlocked, and we could not remove it.

"In the first dog-watch, chief-mate came to me and said the man was awake and desired to see me. I went below. I found him sitting up in his bunk, his back supported by some coats and blankets. He was conversing with the surgeon. His voice was faint, and his pronunciation uncertain. When I entered, he asked the surgeon if I was the captain, and on being answered in the affirmative, extended his hand to me, which

I took; and he commenced thanking me for having saved his life. He appeared well educated and refined in his manners; and his features, in spite of their emaciation, were prepossessing, and, when he smiled, handsome. But he smiled rarely. A terrible anguish seemed to prey upon his heart, and he looked and spoke like one just awakened from a hideous and appalling nightmare. I asked him who he was, and what that chain upon his foot meant. The blood rushed to his face, and he lowered his head upon his breast. He appeared to be reflecting. I repeated the question, and he answered, "I am a convict." We were startled at this, and asked him how he came upon the iceberg." [And here followed the narrative, which, as the reader is already acquainted with it, and as it differs in language only from what has been detailed, it would be useless to repeat. After several pages devoted to questions and replies, the journalist thus proceeds:] "I then asked him how long he had been in the situation in which he had been discovered. He replied that he could not tell for certain, but he thought four days, perhaps five. I then asked him what he thought we should do with him. He made no answer, but lay upon his

back regarding me with earnest eyes. I asked him what his crime had been. He answered that he was an innocent man, suffering unjustly through the wickedness of his enemies. I consulted with the surgeon and chief-mate as to what should be done with him. They advised me to call at the Cape and deliver him up to the authorities. If not, I might be held responsible for his escape. I decided upon adopting this course, and informed him of our decision. He said nothing, but his eyes were upturned and his lips moved, as if in the act of praying. At a quarter to nine we altered the ship's course," &c.

Such were the extracts from this log-book; and the papers went on to say, that this convict, so extraordinarily discovered, was delivered into the hands of Sir William M——, then Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, who at once communicated with the home authorities, asking them for instructions. In the Governor's advices were detailed, with much minuteness, the frightful loss of the convict-ship "Light of the Age," with all hands but *one;* and the most profound amazement was expressed at the spectacle of a man who had lived for such a length of time upon an iceberg, without food, without warmth, in a garb

that, by its constant dampness, must have aggravated the sufferings of the wretched wearer. Whether the Governor was touched with pity at the misfortunes of this convict, who discovered at once, by his demeanour and conversation, a superiority that suffering could not hide nor ill-usage subdue; and, moreover, who had already undergone a punishment so terrible as to have appalled even cruelty itself; it is certain that the tone of his letter seemed designed to impart to its recipients something of the compassion of the writer, perhaps trusting that he might be the means of procuring a mitigation of the severity of the punishment awarded by the law to this convict. But after some weeks came the reply to this worthy Governor, instructing him to take the first opportunity of forwarding the convict, who was down on the crime list as Hamilton, to Botany Bay, there to conclude the term of his sentence of transportation. So, the following week saw these orders executed; saw the "Golden Fleece" *en route* for Sydney; saw the hero of this book, Hamilton, once more a convict and a prisoner.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

MISS GODSTONE.

THERE once upon a time stood, and for aught I know yet stands, upon the western side of the river Thames, some quarter of a mile from its margin, and about twice that distance from the town of Henley, which, as all the world knows, because of its approximation to the river takes the name of Henley-on-Thames,—I say, there once upon a time stood, in the situation I have described, a small and comfortable house, having a tidily-kept lawn in front of it sloping away in the direction of the river's edge; whilst, at its back, flourished a very fair-sized garden, surrounded by a flint wall, rendered insurmountable by reason of the multitude of pieces of broken bottle-glass that fringed its top.

In this cosy little building dwelt, some thirty years or so ago, one Miss Amelia Godstone, a name which, from its having been once or twice mentioned in the earlier part of this history, may not be wholly unknown to my readers.

She was the maternal aunt of Eveleen De Courcy, and in some respects a very singular being. That she was a woman, none who were acquainted with her could deny; but that she was wanting in a multitude of those minute characteristics which, like sands in the mountain, bricks in the edifice, or moments in the year, go to make up the feminine character, all who knew her sufficiently well to hazard an opinion vehemently affirmed. For not to mention innumerable little peculiarities of her temper and disposition, it will be sufficient for my purpose here to say that, in the first instance, she had a great horror of scandal, looking upon it as a sin and a poison, to be shunned as much for the sake of those it discussed, as for the sake of those to whom it was addressed. It was owing to her detestation of this vice,—for in such a light and by such a name did she call it,—that her circle of acquaintance was so limited; for although she was conscious that to the society of Henley she held the

same relation that a segment does to a circle, or a fraction to an aggregate; she would argue to herself, though in different terms, that as a segment, that as a fraction, she was bound to take her share in those duties by which the conduct of the whole was governed; in other words, that as the society of Henley fed and lived chiefly on scandal, so, if she would become a part of that society, she must do unto them as others did unto her,—abuse them by the elaboration of unjust fiction, or wrong them by the application of invented sins.

But though this branch was sufficiently honourable in itself, the trunk upon which it flourished was by no means eminent for the practice of similar solid virtues. For, besides reducing her servants to mere skin and bone, as her enemies would remark, by her meanness, she was noted for never giving anything in charity—indeed, execrated by the Henley beggars as an ancient foe, since she had made an example of two of their species by prosecuting them, and punishing as far as the law and its medium, the magistrate, permitted her. Moreover, she never went to church, but would content herself by sitting at home and reading

her Bible; arguing that, however great her reverence or piety might be as she approached the sacred pile, no sooner was she in it than her religion fled; and, she would continue—others might do what they liked—but, for her part, she had not much devotion where she saw on every side of her folks tricked out in such a manner as best to show off their Sunday clothes; where people joined in the hymns merely for the satisfaction of hearing themselves sing; where most of the congregation went just to let themselves be seen, and to avoid the imputation of laxity; together with many other reasons which discovered more acerbity than truth, and more fancy than fact.

So it will be readily understood, that though Miss Godstone had a few acquaintances, she had no friends. Nor, indeed, did she seem to want them. For, coming of a tolerably good family, she considered herself fully equal, if not far superior, to everybody at Henley; and though she couldn't afford to keep a carriage, and though she still thought fit to adhere to the costume prevalent in her girlish days (ah! how long ago!) in preference to the "fast" style of the young ladies of the present day (this with a toss of the

head), she could yet walk the streets and hold her head as high,—ah, and higher than the best of them. And so she did: and so she was loved accordingly.

She had only two relations in the world; these were Mr. and Miss De Courcy. As her sister had not disgraced herself by her alliance, Miss Godstone professed herself very partial towards the offspring—namely, Eveleen. And this was the cause of Eveleen being so frequently invited to Henley. Now, although Eveleen did not love her aunt, she certainly did not dislike her. Where there is a show of affection on one side, reciprocity will generally ensue. When a child, Eveleen used to recollect her aunt as a middle-aged woman in a stiff gown, who sometimes brought her sweets, and once a cage with a bird in it. So to the child the woman was always welcome; and these infantine impressions of her aunt, Eveleen a long while after recollected. There had been once a little coldness between them: I refer to the visit when Eveleen's mind was wholly occupied with the thoughts of Hamilton, to the complete exclusion of her aunt and all that concerned her. Still she believed in her generosity. She had not

remained at a time long enough at Henley to ascertain the opinions formed of Miss Godstone by the residents. She knew her only as she appeared to her; and this will account for some things that in all likelihood will hereafter be told.

It may easily be supposed that the scandal-mongers—and their name was Legion—of Henley, were only too ready to grasp the least asperity that chance might offer them in order to build thereon a fabrication that might redound more or less to the discredit of their avowed foe. Such an opportunity, however, Miss Godstone had not as yet suffered them to seize; but the time was rapidly coming when the sought-for chance was at last to present itself; when the finger of rumour was to point at Miss Godstone with such persistency as perhaps only the bold consciousness of innocence could have withstood, or as only Miss Godstone could have surveyed with contempt and indifference.

But in order to make myself clearly intelligible, I must request the reader to indulge me in, or pursue with me, a brief retrospection, since certain events largely concerning the due conduct of this narrative demand for a while our attention.

One day, in the latter end of March, 1839, Miss Godstone came in from a little shopping, and, ringing the bell, requested her servant to draw off her galoshes. But just as this was about to be performed, there fell upon the door a series of boisterous knocks, which compelled the servant to relinquish her mistress's feet and attend to the summons.

She was absent some minutes. Miss Godstone, whose parlour windows looked out on to the back of the house, growing impatient, kicked off her galoshes herself, and was about rising to see what the matter was, when the door opened and the servant slowly walked in, laboriously supporting on her arm the apparently fainting form of Eveleen De Courcy.

Miss Godstone uttered an exclamation of surprise, and ran hastily forward to meet her niece.

"Why, Eveleen—what brings you here?" she asked.

Eveleen glanced at her for a moment wildly, then muttered in a low voice, "I am ill—very ill!—put me to bed. I think I am dying."

No sooner had these words been pronounced, than Miss Godstone, turning to the servant,

dismissed her with all speed to the doctor; and then, grasping Eveleen firmly round the waist, conducted her upstairs. Then she commenced undressing her, and in a short while had her comfortably tucked up in bed. She sat herself down by her side and took her hand, which was cold and damp, and she noticed the curious spasmodic motion of the fingers, which opened and shut at intervals and in jerks.

"What is the matter with you, Eveleen?"

There was no reply.

"Why do you come here?—where is your papa?"

At the mention of the word "papa," her whole form seemed struck with convulsions, and she raised herself suddenly in her bed, gesticulating with her hand as if driving something that was before her away. But still she remained silent. Miss Godstone grew greatly alarmed, and endeavoured to make her lie down again. She resisted for a moment; then suddenly yielding, fell backward, and remained motionless.

Miss Godstone went to the window to see if the doctor were coming. At the same moment she heard his footsteps on the stairs. The door opened, and he entered.

He was a tall thin man, with a sallow and grave countenance. He was evidently reflective, full of pauses—of hesitation, loving to mature a thought before he applied it by action. He was a Scotchman, and his name was M'Naire. He bowed slowly to Miss Godstone, who indicated his patient with her finger; then, approaching him, she told him in a few words of Eveleen's unexpected arrival, and of the incoherence of her actions and manners.

The doctor said, "Ah!" Then taking out his watch, went over to the bedside, and felt the patient's pulse. He frowned as he let her wrist drop, and glanced nervously at her face. Her eyes were open, but she lay without movement; and but for the feeble heaving of her bosom, to all appearance without life.

"How do you feel now, Miss De Courcy?" asked the doctor.

There was no answer. No movement even in her eyes.

"Are you in pain?"

Still silent.

Miss Godstone shook her head; and, in a low voice, said:—

"She will not answer you—she would not

answer me. Do you not think a sleeping-draught will compose her? At any rate, close her eyes—for that vacant stare is so terrible."

"I will write a prescription," answered the doctor. "You must be careful of her; for before night I expect she will be seized with fever: intermittent, I am afraid."

"What will be the result?"

"Madam, I cannot possibly say. But tell me, has she received any sudden shock—such as the death of a near relation? Has she a father?"

Low as this was said, Eveleen had heard it; for she covered her face with her hands, and commenced sobbing in a heart-rending manner.

The doctor gave Miss Godstone an intelligent glance.

"I suspected as much: but let her tears flow on. If her illness is the result of grief, they will relieve her."

"It is curious," whispered Miss Godstone, "that when her father's name is mentioned, these attacks come on. He cannot surely be dead, for I should have heard of it. What can be the cause, I wonder!"

The doctor made no reply; but, leaning over Eveleen, asked her tenderly the cause of her grief.

"Do you weep for your father?"

A passionate flood of tears was the only answer, followed by her starting up in her bed and waving her hand with that same deprecating gesture as before.

"Would you like to have him with you?" asked the doctor.

A wild shriek burst from Eveleen, and she grasped the doctor's arm with terrible energy.

"Do not let him come! He would murder me! He would stamp me and grind me beneath his heel! Oh, do not let him come!"

Miss Godstone turned pale, and asked tremblingly, "What is there amiss between you?"

But Eveleen was down again in her bed, muttering to herself and moaning, shaking her head, with a wild glare in her eyes, at some phantasy that seemed to haunt her, then shivering until the bed trembled beneath her.

There came a pause, and the doctor stood by the side of the bed, perplexed and embarrassed. Suddenly Eveleen commenced singing. It was a song set to a wild melancholy tune, and one

that she had often sung to Hamilton in the early stage of their love, when the father slumbered on the sofa, and when the rich sunset of the declining day lighted up the landscape and illumined the room in a voluptuous light. She sang it now, rocking herself to the time of the melody as she rested in a half-recumbent posture —her hands crossed upon her breast, and her eyes, wild and staring, fixed upon the sky, that could be seen through the window partly enveloped by the curtains.

At the close of each stanza she would pause, then slowly repeat the last line, suffering her voice to die away until the concluding words were lost in an almost inarticulate whisper.

Her aunt and the doctor stood by her side transfixed: they seemed spell-bound by the music of the rich voice that filled the room, rising and falling, and breathing in each note the very agony of a wild despair. This was what she sang:—

"There came a music from thy lips, a melody that stole
Like summer breezes floating o'er a sleeping moonlit sea;
It breathed a slumber on my heart, a silence on my soul,
And spoke in tones of love unheard by all save thee and me.

"Tenderly, as if my life had known no weight of sadness,
My spirit felt its influence and whispered back the tune;
Like to the bird that pours its song of solitary gladness
On winds that murmur music in the balmy month of June.

"A flower upon the grave of shatter'd hopes that will not fade,
The phantom of a beauty that shall never more depart;
A sunbeam on my memory's waste to light its desert shade,
Bright as thy love came thy sweet tones of music to my heart."

The voice melted away; there came a few moments of death-like stillness; then she commenced speaking:—"They have taken thee from me, my love, my life! They have robbed me of the treasure of my heart! Art thou living yet, my darling? I am weeping for thee!—Oh, my poor heart is breaking for thee, my own. Yet thou canst not return to me!—where art thou? I will go to thee!—Speak, that I may hear thee!—speak, that I may follow thee! Love thee! oh, how tenderly and well wert thou beloved! And do you weep for Eveleen? Do you lament her? She is thy wife! wife! Let her be. She hurts thee not. Why would you separate us, sir? Father, I love him! You know I love him! Why? Oh, father, canst thou ask me why? My sweet—my heart's darling! He asks me why I love thee! And

must we part, then? Oh, go not—go not! what shall I do without thee?—the world is desolate! —there is no hope!—Oh, father!—Oh, husband! —there is no hope!—oh, no hope!—no hope!— no hope!" Her head was slowly bowed into her hands, and the scalding tears were trickling through her fingers.

"She is raving," said Miss Godstone.

"Poor creature!" exclaimed the doctor, shaking off a tear that glittered on his eyelash. "Heaven have mercy upon her!"

"Amen!" said Miss Godstone.

"I will go and prepare a draught for her at once. She will drink it with avidity, for she is thirsty, though she does not ask for drink. During my absence keep the room darkened, and watch her; let her act as she will—do not restrain her; but be careful to keep the clothes well over her."

And the honest doctor, whom the sight of this sweet girl in such a state had aroused into pity, departed, muttering to himself that this was the most heartrending case he had seen for a long while, and wondering and longing to know the cause.

In a short while he returned with his draught,

the soporific effects of which were soon visible; for, five or six minutes after she had drank it, she was in an uneasy slumber, breathing heavily, and sometimes starting in her sleep and talking.

Miss Godstone commissioned one of the servants to watch her, and went below for a cup of tea. She was in a state of great bewilderment at what she had seen and heard, and after some reflection resolved to write to Mr. De Courcy, requesting an explanation of his daughter's conduct, and the probable cause of her illness. To this letter, it may as well be said here, she never received a reply.

When next Eveleen awoke she was in a violent delirium. As the doctor had expected, the fever was upon her, and her cries and sobbings were terrible and appalling to hear. There was little rest for Miss Godstone and her servants on that night. The doctor, too, was constantly with her, and by the anxious manner in which he kept feeling her pulse and bathing her head, it was apparent he considered his fears well grounded. Sometimes they were compelled to hold the struggling girl down—a difficult and distressing task; since her shrieks were as deafening as her

struggles were fierce. The word "Hamilton" was constantly upon her lips; and when she uttered it, her cries became more subdued. Sometimes she said "Murray," and this was always the signal for a renewal of her paroxysms, as they soon found out. Exhaustion would occasionally supervene and keep her calm; and it was in these phases of her illness that the doctor's face assumed the most anxious look.

At four o'clock she fell into a deathlike slumber, utterly worn out by the night's struggles. It was the question with the doctor whether she would ever wake again. Life and death were now equally suspended, and in silence they stood by her bedside, watching and waiting for the result.

At six o'clock it grew apparent. She opened her eyes and languidly asked where she was. The doctor informed her, and administered at the same time another draught. She closed her eyes and fell asleep again. Now she breathed more freely—more peacefully. Half an hour later the doctor, with face haggard for want of rest, bade farewell to Miss Godstone, whose countenance was no less attenuated from the

same cause, informing her as he drew a glove over half his hand that the crisis was over—the danger past, and that a few days and much care might see Miss De Courcy restored again to health.

CHAPTER II.

EVELEEN'S DEATH.

Without going quite so far as to say that the charge of meanness with which her neighbours sought to degrade the character of Miss Godsmine was just, there can be no question that the prospect of the expenses incidental to her aunt's illness were unanticipated by her without any degree of delight. Imagining that her departure from her home meant simply her dismissal on the part of Mr. De Courcy in consequence of some serious quarrel in their domestic peace, she imagined that Eveleen would now be penniless, and would therefore be unable to discharge, or even contribute to her aunt's payments of her debts. The first question, therefore, that she put to Eveleen, when she was well enough to converse, was how she was situated with regard to means; and the reply, though not wholly as could be desired, was sufficiently satisfactory to

relieve Miss Godstone of something of the weight of her anticipatory cares.

The truth was, that before Eveleen left home her father had entrusted to Miss Marriott a handful of banknotes to be secreted in her purse; it was evident he could not turn his daughter out to starve, though his rage was capable perhaps of devising and executing any other mode of punishment.

This important question having been settled, Miss Godstone's next endeavour was to ascertain the cause of Eveleen's dismissal—for dismissal she had now made up her mind it was. The poor girl during her delirium had revealed enough to warrant persons, even of a nature less suspicious than Miss Godstone, to infer some rather odd conclusions; yet the idea of a clandestine marriage having led to this result was wholly remote from the thoughts of the aunt. The words of her niece had had no other effect upon her than to make her conceive that Eveleen's desire to secure a husband in her sane moods had prompted her in her fits of raving to positively believe she was possessed of one, and to incoherently discuss the fact accordingly.

As for Eveleen, though conscious that her

aunt had acted towards her with some degree of kindness, and therefore anxious to discharge the obligation to the utmost in her power, upon this point she resolved to maintain silence. She well knew her aunt's pride, and dreaded lest the revelation of her being the wife of a convict should be the means of ejecting her from the only asylum that the wide world had now to offer her. Remarking her taciturnity upon this subject, her aunt laconically informed her that she had written to her father, who would doubtless furnish her with all the information she required. But fortunately for Eveleen, Miss Godstone's hopes were disappointed; for had Mr. De Courcy written, it would probably have been with all that acrimony and exaggeration which resentment and anger can alone dictate.

"There is something in your silence," said Miss Godstone one day, "that more than perplexes me. If you have committed a crime you are right in concealing it; but if your past discovers nothing at which memory compels you to blush, I cannot divine your motive for secrecy—at any rate, to so near a relation as myself."

Eveleen blushed, but without indignation. Misfortune had long since subdued all such emo-

tions; her destiny was now to suffer and to be patient. So she answered, "I am sorry, Aunt Godstone, that you should think anything bad of me. If I conceal the past from you, believe me it is from the purest motives. To one who has proved so good, so kind a friend, my self-imposed restraint is sufficiently painful; but the pang will be doubly enhanced if once I imagine that you entertain any suspicions dishonourable to my character."

"I don't suspect anything at all; only I repeat that I can't help thinking your silence very strange."

"Before you arrive at any conclusions, will you wait a little while yet? I promise you you shall know all before long. Only suffer me to remain with you for a few months—perhaps less; for I believe I am not long for this world. Can you endure my society?"

Miss Godstone "pooh-poohed" a little, and said that she was not being treated exactly as an aunt ought to be by her niece. But of course Eveleen knew best. As to her house, she was welcome to remain in it as long as she liked. This spoken with indifference, and a certain frigidity of manner, was capable of as many con-

[illegible] as the temper of the [illegible] might have been disposed to put upon it. Tears—too [illegible] to flow now from a heart which in former days would have driven them back into it very pride—suffused poor Eveleen's eyes, and she turned her head away to conceal her emotion.

But with whatever dread Eveleen might have contemplated the revelation of her secret, she was now rapidly approaching a position when secrecy would be no longer possible. In a word, she was about to be a mother: and though she had employed every art that feminine ingenuity could devise to prevent for awhile the discovery of the truth, she well knew that even to the unsuspicious Miss Gridstone, whose anticipations of such an event were about as remote as the prospect of securing for herself a husband, it must soon become known.

The position of this young creature was terrible. With her heart filled with those tender emotions by which a pitying heaven endeavours to soften the agonies of a bereaved wife; contemplating with that nameless joy known only to women the promise of the future, the pledge of holy wedlock, the supreme ratification of chaste, of perfect love—she was yet compelled to stifle

those feelings in which it would have been her gladness to openly indulge, yet forced to hide her honest pride as if it were a shame, to disavow what it would have been her glory to boast.

But Nature knows no such artificial restrictions. Eveleen was conscious of this, and at last, after much hesitation—much inward sinking and silent terror—she made up her mind to reveal everything to her aunt, before she should anticipate her disclosure by discovering the chief thing for herself. She would plead her love for Hamilton, prove it sanctified by marriage, and narrate to her the appalling desire of her father to have her united to Murray—the cause, she was fully convinced, of all her present misery. Appealing to her as a woman, she would implore her to soften her anger by recalling the sufferings through which she had already passed, the hope that was denied her in the future—a denial that the memory of the past rendered only more terrible, more bitter, and more desolating. "Ah," she thought to herself, "could Aunt Godstone only see my husband, her woman's nature would understand me and pardon."

In no case is the insufficiency of words more

apparent that when we attempt to pourtray the expressions of the human countenance. It would be vain for me to hope to convey to the reader even the least idea of the profound amazement exhibited in Miss Godsame's face, as Eveleen, seating herself by her side, proceeded to communicate to her the whole of her past story. She sat motionless, transfixed, her eyes wide open, her hands a little raised, her head much on one side, and her cheeks very white. Eveleen observed these signs with alarm, but her narrative had been commenced, and it must now be finished. So commencing from the moment she had first seen Hamilton she proceeded regularly on, impeded sometimes by the tears that choked her utterance, compelling her to suspend her story to give vent to the agony that consumed her heart with fresh pangs as the buried secret was rudely torn up, and exposed to the gaze of another. Yet a kind word, even a glance of sympathy, would have relieved her; this was the first time she had imparted her sorrows—the first time she had spoken them aloud, and to the quivering wound the compassion of a fellow-creature would have been balm.

But it came not. Coldly amazed, Miss God-

stone heard her to the end—her forced silence rendering even more poignant the bitterness of Eveleen's tears.

But now she knew the whole, and with bowed head Eveleen waited for her aunt to speak.

"So you are the wife of a convict! You have commenced life well—what will be your next step?"

"He is a convict, but he is not guilty. Believe me, oh believe me! he is not guilty! He could not stoop to such dishonour. His heart was all that is brave, generous, good."

"I read the whole account: never was guilt more clearly demonstrated. If he is innocent, crime is no longer crime. Yes, I read the account, and little did I think at the time that this unknown, wicked man was Eveleen De Courcy's husband."

"No longer De Courcy; I am Eveleen Hamilton." She reared her head proudly, and for the first time she returned her aunt's gaze with all the ardour of honest indignation. "Let him be what he will: shunned by man, denounced by God—an outcast, a villain—let him be what he will—he is my husband!"

So grandly did she look and speak these words,

that her aunt's eyes fell and sought the ground. "I do not see your ring," she said, glancing at her niece's hand.

Eveleen put her hand in her pocket and extracted a purse. This she opened, and took from it a wedding-ring, which she slipped over her finger. "It has been hidden too long; now that there is no more to conceal, it shall remain here."

Miss Godstone rose from her seat, and walked irresolutely up and down the apartment. Everything within her was completely topsy-turvy. Her mind was inverted. All things appeared strange. It seemed as if she were looking at life through her legs. One fact only amidst this mistiness stood out unpleasantly palpable—her niece was the wife of a convict: henceforth the De Courcys—henceforth Miss Godstone—henceforth the whole of the family were degraded from entities into nothings: shot all of a sudden from many degrees above to many degrees below the zero of the social thermometer.

"You father was quite right to act as he did. You have dishonoured him, you have dishonoured me—yourself—all."

Eveleen made no answer.

"Do not make love the paltry excuse," continued the aunt; "there were a thousand duties nobler than love to be remembered ere you sacrificed yourself, your father, me, to the silly passion of a romantic school-girl. Who was this man? You knew nothing of him. What could you have seen in him to like?"

"Do not upbraid me with the past," said Eveleen; "if you knew how each word stabs me to the heart—"

"Stabs you!" quoth Miss Godstone, contemptuously; "and your father, and me, and our pride, don't you think you have stabbed us enough!"

"I have told you all," said Eveleen, her eyes streaming with tears; "I can say no more. If I have sinned, heaven knows my sin has been more than severely punished. Do not add to my despair by harshness. I have too much need of kindness—too much need of sympathy now. Oh! if my husband were by my side, how he would have sheltered me—protected me!" She hid her face in her hands, and, then rising, went to her room, where she threw herself upon her bed in an agony of sorrow.

Miss Godstone continued walking about the

room, first of all going to this window and then to that, and glancing out of them with a vacant eye, not knowing what to think, and helpless to act. She could not pity Eveleen enough to consider in any other light than that of rage; a rage not venting itself in froth and venom, but quietly settling down on and blackening her heart and her brow, a step that loaded the family with degradation. And, moreover, as she went walking about from one window to the other, there entered into her thoughts a black suspicion, which was no other than that the wedding-ring Eveleen had produced was nothing more than a snare and a deception to blind her eyes to a crime which, to her, was even worse than that for which the lover, and as she thought him now, the seducer, had been transported. As these thoughts entered her mind, reflection helped to mature them into a steady conviction; for, first of all, she thought, if the marriage were legal why was it so long concealed? What object could the young pair have in disguising a fact which, had it been honourable, they would have gloried to proclaim? And, secondly, she thought that something more than what Eveleen had related must have occurred to turn a father's love into such terrible

wrath against the child for whom he had always appeared to entertain such a profound affection. Only such a crime as she suspected could possibly have given rise to such an extreme measure as that of Mr. De Courcy expelling his daughter from his home. And, then, was not this Hamilton just the kind of character to commit such a wrong? He who was capable of such crimes as forgery and robbery, was surely equal to the perpetration of other atrocities! And so the whole affair appeared now to grow plain to the apprehension of Miss Godstone; and while she secretly congratulated herself upon her penetration, the anger in her heart grew more black, and the scowl upon her brow more dense.

But she would not do as her brother-in-law had done. She would not turn Eveleen from her doors—I believe she *could* not; and to her honour let it here stand recorded. But never was the name of Hamilton, of father, of home, mentioned between them. There was cold, bleak, painful civility on the part of Miss Godstone; trembling and tears, and a presentiment on the part of Eveleen of an approaching period to her grief, which she did not seek to combat; of which she could not divine the cause, though she prayed

that she might live for the sake of the child that was coming, and of the father who would surely one day return.

Thus the days passed away, and three weeks had elapsed since the day of her first visit to Henley. Miss Godstone never whispered her suspicions, or rather her conviction, and Eveleen was spared this last drop to her cup of misery.

One morning when Eveleen came down to breakfast, she observed her aunt standing at the window, holding a newspaper in her hand. Her face was gloomy, and a certain twitching at the corners of the mouth discovered symptoms of a keen desire to cry, a desire that would unquestionably have been gratified by any other woman than Amelia Godstone. She did not move as her niece entered; and with a "good morning," to which there was vouchsafed no reply, Eveleen took her accustomed seat at the table.

In spite of the general gloominess of her aunt's demeanour, Eveleen plainly perceived that there was something more than usual concealed in her manner and silence this morning. She made no remark, however, but proceeded to the duties of the breakfast-table.

Suddenly Miss Godstone turned, and, seeing her, abruptly exclaimed, "Oh, you are here!"

Eveleen trembled at the tone in which this was said, and fixed on her aunt a look of keen and anxious inquiry.

"It is always unpleasant," continued Miss Godstone, "to be the bearer of bad news; but the painfulness of the duty is mitigated when we are conscious that those to whom we address ourselves are the cause of the evil tidings we impart."

Miss Godstone was usually select in her mode of expressing herself, and her selectness was marked in proportion to the state of her temper.

"What is it you have to tell me?" asked Eveleen, in a frightened whisper.

"Perhaps," said her aunt, raising her tone and speaking with a degree more of warmth, "it may not interest you, or if it should it may affect you in a manner exactly opposite to what nature might suggest, for this reason I have hesitated to acquaint you with the matter, not knowing really whether you would care to hear it."

Thoughts of Hamilton instantly swept across Eveleen's mind, but she as instantly dismissed

them as she remembered the tone of her aunt. Any news of *him* would have been prefaced by remarks of a different nature. Was it of her father?

"What is it?" she asked again.

"You had better read it for yourself;" and Miss Godstone, placing her finger upon the paragraph, handed the paper to Eveleen. Then she turned her back upon her, and resumed her place at the window.

Eveleen took the paper with a trembling hand, read the portion indicated by her aunt, then, with a loud, agonising shriek, let it drop, and fell backwards in convulsions upon the floor. Miss Godstone, certainly not anticipating such a result, turned with a look of alarm, and hastily rushed towards Eveleen. The paragraph which had taken such effect upon Eveleen, ran thus:—

"SUICIDE.—On Monday last, between the hours of eleven and twelve at night, the servants belonging to Mr. Samuel De Courcy, gentleman, residing at Beckly Villa, Y——, were alarmed at hearing the report of a pistol fired in a room below. Thornley, the coachman, accompanied by the rest of the servants, instantly rushed to

his master's bedroom, which is on the second floor; but on trying it found it locked. They knocked a great number of times, but without eliciting any reply. Inspector Smart was then sent for, who proceeded to break open the door. A frightful spectacle greeted their entrance. The unfortunate gentleman, Mr. De Courcy, was extended at full length along the floor, his right hand grasping the pistol with which he had shot himself through the temples. Domestic misery is said to have been the cause of this act."

Eveleen was at once carried to bed, and medical aid speedily procured. Her eyes had closed during her fit, and they never opened again. Though the kind-hearted Doctor M'Naire, whose sympathies had been aroused by the apparent desolation of this young creature, exerted all his skill to restore her to consciousness, his efforts proved unavailing. Fate, who had pursued her with such unrelenting severity, now that this little but heart-breaking drama was almost concluded, seemed to grow pitying. In a state of unconsciousness the pure soul of Eveleen passed away,—passed, leaving its beauteous tenement of clay to ignore the existence of the new life that had sprung from its side,—leaving to the cold-

ness of the iron-hearted world the pledge of one of the most sacred, most pure, most honourable loves that ever adorned our humanity, and that it ever entered into the heart of the demons of the earth to blast and to crush.

CHAPTER III.

MASTER FREDERICK WILLIAMS.

My brief retrospection is concluded. I can, therefore, start now afresh from that point from which, the reader may perhaps remember, I departed in the first chapter of this book.

Miss Godstone, I have said, hated scandal, and for this reason the Henley votaries of this unholy creed determined to have revenge upon their foe, either by invention, should she not give them an opportunity, or by exaggeration if she did. Now, although it was very well known that a young lady—whom some said was the sister, some the cousin, and some the niece of Miss Godstone—had died in this relation's house, enmity resolved to ignore the fact, and, without hesitation, and with much impudence, professed to view the child as the offspring of no less a person than Miss Godstone herself;

and that no opportunity might be lost to infuse suspicion into the minds of those not unwilling to suspect, there was spread abroad a fame that the story of the young lady was a fabrication on the part of Miss Godstone to disarm inquiry and humiliate suspicion. As the lady had no friends in the town, these rumours were listened to with delight, and after awhile accepted without doubt. Even the rector of Hartley, the Revered Mathieson Matthews, countenanced the tale by one day openly exclaiming, that though he hesitated to pronounce upon the credibility of the report, he was inwardly satisfied that Miss Godstone was quite qualified to support the part imputed to her; since, he added solemnly, she who was in the habit of neglecting the ceremonies of religion, was fully capable of violating the duties of society.

But though all this, and a good deal more, was duly reported to the person concerned, she listened to it with contempt, and ironically thanked her informant for her gratifying communication.

"For," said she, "it is gratifying to be spoken of thus by creatures from whom a compliment would be worse than an injury, and a piece of praise a downright insult."

But whether Miss Godstone was sincere or not in what she said, cannot now be known.

Burdened, however, with this child, whom, as far as her own personal feelings were concerned, she would very willingly have drowned; detesting, from the hour of its birth, this little innocent reminder of a love she considered criminal, or if not criminal, of an union which she held as horribly degrading, she was yet compelled to treat it with such care as might not render her susceptible of the charge of cruelty; secretly resolving, however, that the moment it could be dismissed with safety, it should find another asylum. With this aim she hired a wet-nurse, who performed her duties with all the zealousness of a woman susceptible of the charms of helplessness, united to infantine beauty in its richest form. For had Eveleen lived, she would have had no reason to offer as a plea for the admiration of her child, a mother's feelings.

When the worthy nurse was no longer needed she was dismissed, and Miss Godstone voluntarily took upon herself the further cares of the little innocent. She had the child christened "Frederick Williams,"—a fact that had given occasion for the libellous and scandalising tongue

of Henley to wag with redoubled ferocity—herself standing its godmother, and some old gentleman-acquaintance of hers, godfather.

This old gentleman's name was Musgrave. He was an ancient suitor of Miss Godstone, and, although twice rejected by her, still viewed her with an amorous eye. When the scandal of Henley reached his ears, he hastened to communicate on the subject with his old flame; who, knowing him to be sincere, put him in possession of the real facts of the case. Though there was nothing pathetic in Miss Godstone's delivery, he was so touched by the mournful story, that he went home, and although a poor man, gave orders to a stone-cutter to erect a tombstone over Eveleen's grave; of which, being in his younger days a dabbler in verse, he furnished the inscription.

Weeks, months, years rolled away; the voice of scandal faded from a whisper into silence, and the babe, Frederick Williams, slowly expanded into a pretty boy of eight years of age. The character of Miss Godstone remained unaltered; but her person discovered visible marks of decay. Her hair was growing white, her face wrinkled, her voice was querulous, her limbs jerky, her

under-lip came slowly out, and her upper-lip went gradually in. In a word, Time began to sit heavily upon Miss Godstone.

One day she told her servant that she was going for a journey, and bade her pack up a little trunk to accompany her. This being done, a seat was secured for her in the "Highflyer" coach—railways then were more limited than they are now—and away went Miss Godstone; and after a ride of three hours, was dropped, with her box, in front of a little hotel situated in Cork Street, in the town of Fernley.

Having bespoke a dinner and a bed, she sallied forth into the street, and after some ten minutes' walking, found herself opposite a small linen-draper's shop, bearing over it, in white letters, the name, "George Jerkins." There was nobody visible, and Miss Godstone having remained quiet for a few moments, perhaps in expectation of somebody's arrival, suddenly fell to violently tapping with her stout umbrella. Whereupon a shuffling of feet was heard overhead, and shortly after a small door opened at the side, and a little bald-headed man entered hurriedly and violently. On seeing a lady he bowed with much meekness, and placing himself behind the counter, asked

her in a peculiar voice what he could serve her with to-day.

"Do you not recollect me, Mr. Jerkins?" asked Miss Godstone, looking hard at him.

Mr. Jerkins looked hard back in reply; but dissatisfied with his inspection, took out a pair of spectacles which he adjusted on his nose, and then stared again. At last after a moment he gave a melo-dramatic start, and raised his hands.

"Bless my heart! Why—surely—it's Miss Godstone, ain't it?"

"The same," answered the lady.

"Well, to be sure," exclaimed Mr. Jerkins, taking off his spectacles and commencing to vigorously polish them with the end of a red silk pocket-handkerchief; "to think of my not knowing you again—ah, ah! excuse me, ma'am; but Mrs. Jerkins will laugh at this, to be sure."

"How many years is it, Mr. Jerkins, since you left Henley?"

"Twenty-one, come a month," answered Mr. Jerkins, rapidly.

"Dear me! how the time does fly! Twenty-one years, ah! And do you find your business more remunerative here, Mr. Jerkins, than at Henley."

"Times are 'ard, ma'am," said Mr. Jerkins, cautiously. "This business ain't exactly the thing, even in the best o' times, to support a wife and five chickens on. They say the same thing down in London; and if it's bad there, what must it be here? Socks ain't meat, ma'm, nor collars corn; and when there's no custom, our goods ain't of no more use than a clean old bone to a 'ungry dog."

"Ah! well, Mr. Jerkins, I have come here to have a little talk with you upon a subject of some importance. Shall we be interrupted here, or had we not better enter some private room?"

Mr. Jerkins half-closed one eye, and fixed the other, scanningly, upon Miss Godstone's face and person. He seemed to be weighing certain conjectures which her suggestion had provoked; but after a few moments, apparently decided, he said, "What is the subject, ma'am?"

"If there's a chance of our being disturbed, there is no use in my commencing it here," answered Miss Godstone. "Surely you have a private sitting-room or something!"

The doubt expressed in this exclamation touched Mr. Jerkins' pride; that there should

he even a question of his possessing such a thing was an insult to his dignity. "Yes, ma'am, I have a sitting-room," he said, sternly; "if you will follow me, I will conduct you there."

He opened the door, and leading the way up a dark and narrow staircase, entered a small apartment, smelling musty and close, and bade Miss Godstone be seated. "Here, ma'am," said he, "we shall not be disturbed. My missis is out and the young 'uns at school, so now you can speak just whatever you like." And so saying, he took a chair opposite her, and prepared to listen.

After untying her bonnet strings to ease her throat, Miss Godstone said, "I will come at once to the question, by asking you if you are willing to take an apprentice into your business?"

Mr. Jerkins thought, and then, after a pause, said, "Can you make it worth my while, ma'am?"

"In what way, Mr. Jerkins?"

"Nay, ma'am," said Mr. Jerkins, smiling faintly, and fidgetting about the edge of his chair. "I leave you to find that out."

"But," said Miss Godstone, "I do not exactly apprehend your meaning. 'Worth your while' is a very ambiguous phrase, Mr. Jerkins."

Unfortunately Mr. Jerkins was ignorant of the meaning of the word ambiguous; but he was acute enough to know that he was expected to explain himself; so he answered, still faintly smiling, "The truth is, ma'am, apprentices are drugs in our market. They're to be picked up in handfuls—smart, intelligent lads, too, ma'am—in handfuls."

"Well?"

"So you see, although I'd do anything to oblige you, Miss Godstone, for you was a good customer at Henley—ah! the best of 'em all. They were a mean lot, ma'm, in those days," said Mr. Jerkins, forgetting what he was going to say, and beginning to ramble.

"You were saying——" suggested Miss Godstone.

"True, true; I was saying that apprentices have grown so cheap, that unless they comes recommended by something more solid than quickness and smartness, you know, why——"

"Well?"

"Why,—they ain't worth taking," said Mr.

Jerkins, [illegible] the [illegible] with a smack, and [illegible] it with a "there!"

"But what would you require in order to induce you to take this young boy as an apprentice—of course, boarding him as well?"

"Who is he, ma'am, may I ask? Has he been [illegible]? Is he likely to go to the bad or set wicked examples? for I have five young 'uns myself, ma'am," said Mr. Jerkins, tenderly, "all depending for their morals on me and my missis: and it wouldn't do, you know——"

"No, you are right: it wouldn't. But when I tell you that this boy is eight years of age, you will perhaps comprehend, that should there be any danger anywhere, he will be the sufferer."

"Only eight years of age! Why, he ain't fit to leave home yet!" cried Mr. Jerkins.

"Oh yes, he is, though," re-echoed Miss Godstone. "He's only eight in time but twelve—ah! fourteen in head."

"Which means——" said Mr. Jerkins, placing his head on one side, and not comprehending her.

"Drat the blockhead!" thought the lady, savagely. "Why, it means that he is quite fit to leave home—quite old enough, I mean; for he's been fit these two years."

"Now, don't think me imperant, ma'am," said Mr. Jerkins, deprecatingly; "but may I ask who this young man is—what's his connections, and such like?"

"Yes, you may ask what you like. First of all, you want to know who this boy is—he's not a young man yet, please. Well, I blush to tell you; he's a kind of very remote relation of mine, and as such has certain claims upon me. In a few words, he is the illegitimate son of a niece of mine."

Mr. Jerkins gave a little hop in his chair, and looked bashful. Then he frowned darkly; but contented himself with merely saying, "Ah!"

"This," continued Miss Godstone, "will therefore account for my wishing him to be apprenticed to such a trade as yours. Had his birth been honourable I would have endeavoured to secure him a better position—and in spite of the brat's father," she added to herself.

"But ain't there danger to be feared from a child brought into the world such-wise?" inquired Mr. Jerkins, nervously.

"How, man?" said Miss Godstone, angrily. "It's flesh and bone, like you and me; it has a soul; it breathes; it will or can think! What's

the difference." "The dishonour is social, moral—not natural."

Mr. Jerkins subsided, and secretly came to the conclusion that Miss Godstone was a wonderful woman. Still a feeling of doubt lurked within him, and he shuffled his feet nervously to and fro about the carpet.

"There is no difference, physical like," he observed, arguing the question by stretching out his arms, and placing the fore-finger of one hand upon the palm of the other; "but morally like, you know, is another thing. I don't mean to say that the lad may have anything wrong on him, but in him," he said, smiling at his own subtle distinctions. "He may be virtuous to the *eye*; but to the *understanding* he may commit mischief."

"*Nonsense!*" said Miss Godstone; "the boy is *good*, and no boy can do more than be *good*."

Mr. Jerkins had half a mind to ask why, then, she was so anxious to get rid of him. But perhaps it was as well he did not; for had he done so, he would have certainly received some evasive reply; for it is not probable that Miss Godstone would have confessed to him one half the pas-

sions—the sense of shame, of family degradation, of horror of Eveleen's crime, of her husband's doom, &c., &c.—which agitated her head, and concentrated themselves into bitter animosity against the helpless and innocent perpetuator of the family shame.

But all this Mr. Jerkins neither thought to provoke nor cared to conjecture. He was a man of business, with an eye of which the pupil must have contained the image of a guinea; since he only examined a thing to value it, and only valued it to render it profitable. Now, here came an apprentice: profit must be made out of him; and so Mr. Jerkins imagined that the best way to achieve his end, was to make some scruples about his illegitimacy. But Miss Godstone was no fool; her remarks had proved this to him, and, therefore, there remained now nothing more to be done than to come plump to the embarrassing question. So after a little movement of the legs, a little fiddling about with the top button of his coat, and one or two movements of the lips, which seemed about to utter something, but which hesitation abruptly silenced, Mr Jerkins said—

"Well, ma'am; and now what do you horfer

for me to take the lad and learn him drapering?"

"Fifty pounds," answered the lady.

Mr. Jerkins stared hard at nothing, evidently in a profound reverie, from which he awoke himself by slowly shaking his head.

"You won't take it?" exclaimed Miss Godstone.

"The trouble is great, ma'am, and the money small."

"Oh well," said Miss Godstone, making a movement as if to rise, "the matter is settled. If you won't take it there are thousands—thousands! there are millions!" said she, emphatically, "who will. I thought, because I have known you a long time, that I would give you the first chance. But since you've refused it, there's an end of the matter." And she rose up.

"Stop, ma'am," cried Mr. Jerkins; "pray don't be in a hurry. Your horfer comes upon me so sudden like, that—that I should jist like to think a trifle before I decide."

"Well, Mr. Jerkins, I am stopping at the hotel here, and shall remain until to-morrow—there being no return coach to-day. So if you

will communicate with me before eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, I shall be pleased. Good afternoon, Mr. Jerkins."

"Good afternoon, ma'am," said Mr. Jerkins, bowing himself and his visitor down-stairs, and out of the house. Then the one went back to her hotel, and the other to his sitting-room, there to await the arrival of his wife in order to confer with her upon the important subject.

It would occupy the space of at least two chapters to give the reader even a faint conception of the discussion that took place between Mr. and Mrs. Jerkins, on the return of the latter from her walk. The number of "ma'ams" and "sirs" that dignified their dialogues, were as incalculable as the frowns, the tears, the "pooh, poohs!" the "very goods," the "have it your own ways," &c., &c., that ornamented them. During the space of a quarter of an hour there were no less than three violent quarrels, and two approximations to hysterics. But it is satisfactory to record, that as the interlocutors grew more intelligible, they became more peaceful; and that the end of a two hours' stormy discussion, was an amicable arrangement between the two—firstly, to close with Miss Godstone's

[illegible] secondly to produce the money and divide it; and thirdly to secure the boy and compel him to do as much work and more than he could perform — and so, to use Mr. Jenkins's phrase, "make the hold money in that way." For the radical design of this gentleman was, after Miss Grahame had offered him hire to "go in the heighty area," Bob Sawyer, and his wife, put this ambitious scheme to flight.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JERKINSES AT HOME.

LET the reader picture to himself a boy eight years of age, discovering at the first glance a gentle, if not a noble, origin; a neck and forehead white as a fair woman's; eyes bright, large and dark, with something in them of the love-lighted beauty of Eveleen's; with all Hamilton in the expression of his mouth—a mouth whose short, superb underlip would have made Venus deny her Adonis for a single kiss; hair rich with the richest auburn curls; and over all a subdued, saddened, hesitating demeanour, rendering him in his manners somewhat precocious; and the child called by Miss Godstone "Frederick Williams"—the child of Eveleen and Hamilton, will stand before him.

How so fine a boy could have failed to win the affection, or at least, the something more than coldness, in the heart of Miss Godstone, sur-

prince me not so much as how she could have gone on tolerating him for such a length of time. In him she perceived nothing more than the moderately fair embodiment of a sin and a shame of which the bare recollection would make her blush and bite her lips with anger. Yet what occasion there was for this vexed I cannot imagine; for she was now alone in the world, without kith or kin to partake in her pride of ancestral honours; she was shunned by the few, and cut by the many, and the five or six who still continued her acquaintance were impelled to visit her rather by the prospect of her tea and muffins than by the promptings of an amiable friendship.

But the human heart—and especially the female heart is a mystery of which no conjectures can yield the solution, and of which, therefore, I will content myself with the description, leaving the explanation to those more competent to offer an opinion.

It was very evident that Miss Godstone was anxious to get rid of Freddy as soon as possible, otherwise it is not easy to conceive how she could find the heart to dismiss the poor little fellow into the world at so early an age. Once rid of the little incubus, her mind would be more

at ease; the substance of the crime would then be replaced by the shadow, and if he died—ah! if he should die, then the shadow would depart, and life be as it was in the past.

Yet there had been nothing downright cruel in her conduct towards him for those eight years. She had been uniformly stern and severe, constantly rebuking him for offences he had not committed, and urging him to repent of that for which there was no cause of contrition. A stern, unmarried woman, like Miss Godstone, of course was not supposed to understand children. She considered them all men and women—dwarfs, to be sure—but still men and women; and if they didn't act as such, they were deserving of rebuke. However impossible this may seem, he yet wants experience in life who shall deem such a character incredible.

Children always want companions; yet to this child companionship had been denied him. Wistfully would he eye the little groups that danced and laughed about the streets, and once, after long hesitation, he mustered up courage enough to ask Miss Godstone to be permitted to join them.

"Do you mean those dirty, ragged children?" she asked with a frown.

"Yes, ma'am," was the trembling answer.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself for such a wish. The idea! fancy you wanting to mix with that noisy crew!" Then to herself she said, "But what is one to expect from the son of a convict!"

So the boy, like a little Crusoe, lived alone, and very desolate indeed was his existence. All his mornings were occupied in conning lessons far beyond his years; and dreadful were those moments when Miss Godstone, sternly sitting in her arm-chair, would take the book and frown at every fault, he standing shivering the while before her.

But when children are denied friends in their own species, they seek for and find them elsewhere. There was an old cat belonging to the house which Freddy loved with all his heart. It is true he concealed his affection for it from Miss Godstone, but behind her back he would lay down beside it on the little sofa, or the floor, and smooth its back and talk to it, laying his face close to its nose, and telling it all his little sufferings—how lonely he felt, and how unkind Miss Godstone was; and did the cat pity him? And when the cat purred, the little boy thought it said

yes, and listened attentively, sometimes believing the cat would open its mouth and answer with a human voice.

Then there was a little rose-tree at the bottom of the garden, which also came in for a large share of Freddy's affection. Exquisite was his delight when, as the winters rolled away, he would go day after day and note how the tree put forth its leaves, and the little green pimples upon it grow bigger, until they became quite red with inflammation, and burst at last into beautiful roses. He had a book full of fairy tales, which he kept in a little cupboard in his bedroom, and would sometimes steal up to read; amazingly wide would his beautiful eyes open as he diligently spelt through dismal stories of exquisite ladies being turned into milk-white does, or fountains that discharged golden waters, by wicked enchanters, who would bring out bows and arrows to shoot the first, or magic cups to drink the other. One of these tales told of a lovely lady, who was a real princess, having been turned into a rose-tree by a squinting dwarf, and only released, or reconverted, when this ugly dwarf died a hideous death through the just revenge of a bold prince. Freddy thought his rose-tree might

be a princess too, and dreading lest thirst might hasten her end ere some royal lover should deliver her, was unnecessarily drenching it with water. He also distributed crumbs of bread about its mouth in the hopes that this princess might eat them; then stole away to his lessons, and by-and-by return, and feel gratified when he found the crumbs gone, thinking how hungry the poor creature must have been. The birds fared heartily through him and his princess.

And such chiefly had been the life of Eveleen's child.

One fine morning, when he was looking out through a front-room window, he perceived a man coming along the road bearing on his shoulder a small black box. The child amused himself by conjecturing its contents, but was surprised to see the man walk straight up to the gate, and putting the box down, ring the bell. A servant came out, and Freddy heard the man say, as he pushed the box towards her, "For Miss Godstone."

An hour after, when he went up-stairs to his room, he found the same servant kneeling down before a small chest of drawers, and emptying its contents into the identical black box which the man had brought.

"What's that for?" he asked.

"You're agoin' away," answered the servant. They never "mastered" him, these people; menials always take the cue from the conduct of those they serve.

"Where to, Sarah?"

"Can't say at all."

"Miss Godstone didn't tell me I was going away." This was another peculiarity. The lady here mentioned would never allow him to call her aunt; it was always "Miss Godstone."

"Well, you are." And the servant as she spoke smiled; for in a few days there would be a bed the less to make every morning.

Freddy went away wondering; but he had not the courage to ask Miss Godstone any questions that day—her looks were too forbidding. The truth was, she was thinking of her fifty pounds. Perhaps after all there was some foundation in the scandal of Henley: at least, I mean that portion of it which attached the quality of meanness to her character.

This incident of the black box occurred the day after Miss Godstone's return from Fernley.

On the following morning, much about the same time, at which the black box had arrived,

another man walked up to the gate and rang the bell. Unlike his predecessor who was tall and broad-shouldered, this man was short and thin. Miss Godstone went to the window to see who it was, and the little man observing her, raised his hat and disclosed a bald head.

"You are punctual, Mr. Jerkins," said she, opening the parlour door, and addressing that gentleman who was ardently rubbing his feet on the mat.

"Punctuality, ma'am, is the soul of business," said he.

"Come in; your *protégé* is quite ready for you. Sarah go and see where Master Freddy is."

And while she was absent, Mr. Jerkins followed Miss Godstone into the parlour, and sat himself down carefully at the edge of the sofa. Intuitively he felt that when a man enters an old maid's house, he must be careful what he touches.

They had not much time for conversation; for Freddy who was controlled by Miss Godstone much in the same manner that a soldier is controlled by his officer, on receiving his summons, left the rose-tree beside which he had been standing, and hastened to the house.

"And this is him, is it?" asked Mr. Jerkins, as Freddy shyly entered the room and stood near the table, glancing now at Miss Godstone, now at Mr. Jerkins.

"Yes, that's he!" was the correcting reply.

"Well, young gentleman, and what's your name?" said Mr. Jerkins.

"Freddy."

"Sir, please," said Miss Godstone.

"Sir," said Freddy.

"Frederick, please," said Miss Godstone.

"Frederick," said the boy.

"Frederick what?" said Miss Godstone, heavily.

The boy paused, and then replied "Williams."

Mr. Jerkins looked gratified. He knew this little scene had taken place for him—at all events, he thought so.

"Ah, Frederick Williams." Then searching about in his thoughts for something to say, Mr. Jerkins exclaimed, "Well, Master Frederick Williams, and how do you do?"

"Quite well, thank you," answered Freddy.

"Sir," said Miss Godstone.

"Sir," answered Freddy.

"Always say 'sir,' when you're addressed. Do you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Again Mr. Jerkins looked puzzled. "Well, Master Frederick, I hope we shall become good friends. Will you shake hands with me?"

Freddy manfully extended his little hand and put it into the horny palm thrust before him.

"Well, Mr. Jerkins," said Miss Gradstone, looking at the clock, "it is better to get this matter over as soon as possible. When does your mind return?"

Mr. Jerkins accepted the hint, and said, "Very soon, ma'am."

"Oh, if you think you can carry his box for him," and she pointed to the trunk in question that could be seen through the open door in the hall.

Mr. Jerkins went to it and raised it. "Oh yes, very easily, ma'am.

"It will save a porter, you know. Well, good-bye, Freddy."

The boy looked at his aunt, then around the room, and burst into tears.

"What are you crying for?" said his aunt in a stern voice.

Freddy didn't know; perhaps for his rose-tree, perhaps for the cat. Certainly not for his aunt, and certainly not at that future, which, dim as it looked to his boyish eyes, was bright when compared with the blackness of the present.

He rubbed his eyes suddenly and glanced again at his aunt. "Good-bye," said she. Did he expect a kiss? Silly boy! there are no kisses for such as thee from the Miss Godstones of this or any other world.

Mr. Jerkins took him by the hand and seized his trunk; then bowing to the lady, he sallied forth through the front gate and walked quickly down the street. Once Freddy, as he trotted by his side, turned to look at the spot he had left—perhaps for ever. Then he burst into an agony of weeping, which the little man by his side did not offer to check.

"This way," said Mr. Jerkins, as they descended from the coach at Fernley; and grasping the black box by its cord he led the way up Cork Street, into his shop, which stood at the end of the street.

"Hallo, father!" said a voice, as they entered; and Freddy glancing up, perceived a fat face, marked with the small-pox, staring at him over the counter.

"Hallo, Bill! you there," answered th
thus addressed. "Where's mother?"

"Upstairs, washing Jim."

"All right. That's one of my sons
Jenkins to Freddy, pointing at the fat fac

"Who's he?" asked Bill, nodding at

"Now, don't you mind," retorted the
angrily: "you just look after your own b
Everythink 'll be made known to yer in ti

The smiling face, thus reprimanded, s
into gravity; and Mr. Jenkins pushing o
door, bade Freddy follow him. But, be
mounted the staircase, he shouted back.

"Wot business this morning, Bill?"

"Three dollars and a tie," came the
from behind the counter.

"The green?"

"No, the blue."

"The twopenny?"

"Yes."

"All right." And Mr. Jenkins went up
When he arrived at the landing, he pushe
the door, and he and Freddy and the box
a small room together.

A stout, coarse woman was occupied
end in scrubbing something in a tub, from

issued a cloud of steam. A boy stood by her side, devouring an apple, and watching his mother's operations with much gratification.

"Why, there's father!" said a voice from the tub.

Freddy looked, and perceived through the steam the outline and features of another boy.

"Yes, here's father," said Mr. Jerkins; "and very much surprised is he at findin' your mother at this sort of work in the front parlour, as if there warn't any bedrooms in the house."

"That's right, bang away the moment you come," said the woman, who proved to be Mrs. Jerkins; "hammer and tongs, tooth and nail, it's all the same."

"Now just mind your language, and remember your dignity for once, ma'am," said Mr. Jerkins; "there's more than the family in the room."

"I wouldn't care, no, not *that*," said Mrs. Jerkins, dashing a sponge furiously into the water, and throwing some soap suds into the eyes of the helpless inmate of the tub, who cried out with the pain—"if all the world was here. I'm a doin' my duty to my family, and knows wot's right!"

Mr. Jerkins made no reply, but sat down and looked about him. At last he exclaimed, "Here's the apprentice!"

"Oh," was all the remark.

"Yes, here he is ready for work; aint you, young 'un?"

Freddy, not knowing what to say, remained quiet.

"Hasn't he a tongue?" inquired the lady of the house, frowning at her husband over the tub.

"Ay, and I'll make him find it too afore long. But get that tub out of the way—it annoys me."

Without much regard for delicacy, the inmate of the tub stood up, and suffered himself to be wiped dry. Then he stepped into his clothes, and seizing the tub by one end, whilst his brother grasped it by the other, they bore it out of the room, spilling no small part of its contents in their exit, amidst the execrations of the father, who howled at them for their clumsiness.

In the meanwhile, Mrs. Jerkins having finished drying her arms, had taken a seat near her husband, and was busily employed staring at Freddy, to whom nobody had offered a seat, and who therefore remained standing near the door.

She was a bony, thick woman, with a neck and waist much about equal in circumference, and red arms and pointed elbows, which she placed a-kimbo

when reflective or idle. At first sight she seemed stout, but a more minute inspection discovered her rotundity both of form and limbs to be the result of the largeness of her bones. She had a heavy forefinger, gritty at the end, and a face of which I am tempted to refer my reader to the pages of Fielding for the description.

At the first glance at Freddy a slight frown had gathered upon the brow of Mrs. Jerkins, and the more she looked the more numerous grew the wrinkles. The truth was, she was secretly comparing his appearance to that of her children; and it may hardly be necessary to state that the comparison was by no means flattering to the latter.

"What is his name?" she asked.

"Frederick Williams," said her husband.

"Oh! come here, Williams," said she.

Freddy, rather alarmed at the ungainly figure that called him, approached slowly to within some three feet of the woman, and drew up, with his eyes cast down on the floor.

"Is that his box?" asked she.

"Yes," said Mr. Jerkins.

"Can you lift it?" she asked Williams.

Freddy, without reply, went towards it, and

tried to raise it, but finding it above his strength, answered, "No, ma'am."

"Oh yes, you can if you like; come, try again," said Mr. Jerkins.

The boy tried, and succeeded in partially raising it from the ground. But it was apparent he could not carry it.

"Now that's what I call stubbornness," said Mr. Jerkins; "what do you say, missis?"

"He'll come the gent too much for us, you'll see."

"Will he though!" said Mr. Jerkins. "Come, up with that there box at once, sir?"

Freddy began to cry.

"Oh, murder!" exclaimed Mrs. Jerkins; "if that's going to be his little game, you'd better sew the money up in his shirt and send him home again."

But as this suggestion did not at all meet with Mr. Jerkins's views, and moreover, as he was anxious that his wife should not get sick of the boy too soon, he said, "Wait a little, we'll soon cure him of all that sort of thing. You can take his box up for him now, and show him where he's to sleep."

"I weren't born to be his valley," said his wife.

"Quite right," said Mr. Jerkins; "but since I carried it all the way from his home to the coach, and from the coach to here, you can carry it hup-stairs, can't you?"

Mrs. Jerkins gave a toss of her head, and was about to reply, when suddenly checking herself, she darted at the box, and rudely picking it up, shouted to Freddy to follow her, and left the room.

They mounted two flights of stairs, each growing narrower and darker as it neared the summit.

When they reached the top, Mrs. Jerkins breathed heavily, and then pointing to a little dark spot, which she called a room, but of which the English was "hole," she said, "That's where you sleep. Go in, and unpack your box. But don't be long, for we want yer downstairs."

Then she went away, leaving Freddy alone. A little window, dusty and obscured by the cobwebs of many years, admitted light enough only to render the darkness visible. But after a few minutes his eyes grew accustomed to the obscurity, and he looked around him. In the corner was spread a mattrass, upon which were thrown a blanket and a rug. A pillow, without a covering, stood at the top, and the mattrass was with-

out sheets. A broken basin and an old tin can assumed the dignity of a washing-stand, and the floor, with wide seams choked with dust or dirt, was carpetless. For what reasons Mrs. Jerkins had desired him to unpack his box, seeing that there were no drawers in the room into which to empty the contents, cannot be known. But Freddy, too young to reflect, and too terrified to be disobedient, proceeded to undo the cord and open the lid.

There was not much in the little fellow's wardrobe to testify to the benevolence or prodigality of Miss Godstone. Three small shirts, three pairs of socks, a little jacket and waistcoat, a cap, and one or two other articles of dress, neither warm nor good, were all his outfit. She had not even put him away a little Bible or prayer-book—perhaps thinking he was too young to understand them—perhaps thinking they were useless if he did.

He would no doubt have literally obeyed Mrs. Jerkins by taking all these things out, and for want of some better place, laying them along the dusty floor, had not the voice of Mr. Jerkins calling below interrupted him. So leaving his box as it was, he left his apartment and trotted down-

stairs. On reaching the intermediate landing—namely, the one between his room and the Jerkins's floor—he observed through an open door, a little girl standing by an old man, who, with spectacles on nose, was seated at a desk engaged in ruling a copy-book. Upon the door was marked in little black letters, this name :—

MONS. GAUTIER.

The little girl turned to look at him as he passed, and the old man raised his head and peered over his spectacles. But he did not even pause to return their glance, for once again rose the cry of Mr. Jerkins, shouting, "Williams!"

He was standing at the foot of the staircase, and said to him, angrily, as the boy came down-stairs, "Why don't you answer when I call you? Always do so,—do you hear?"

During Freddy's absence up-stairs, Mr. and Mrs. Jerkins had been having a little conversation. Let it be known here that the acerbity displayed by Mr. Jerkins towards his apprentice in the first instance had been borrowed from the conduct of Miss Godstone; for such was the nature of this little bald-headed linendraper, that

having no character of his own, he always readily submitted himself to the influence of external causes, and during the exercise of that influence acted submissive to its dictates. It was enough for him that Miss Godstone had spoken with contempt of Freddy; that she had called him illegitimate; that he had discovered in her demeanour an abhorrence to the little boy, which, though partly qualified or negatived by art, was, to the eyes of the watchful and observant Jerkins, as positive as positive could be: I say it was enough for him that he had noted all this, for thus instructed he knew perfectly well what part he might safely play; what character he might, without fear, assume.

But when his spouse had cast her eyes upon Freddy, her maternal instinct perceived at once the enormous chasm that divided him from her children in every conceivable thing. She remarked what no mother loves to remark; Freddy silently told her what no mother loves to be told;—that he was handsome, gentlemanly, and everything that was simple and beautiful; whilst, on the contrary, that her children were ugly, coarse, and everything that was offensive and unsatisfactory. The influence of Miss God-

stone having in a measure departed from Mr. Jerkins, he entered now into the moral jurisdiction of his wife; and no sooner had she communicated to him her feelings; imparted to him her motherly grievance, than a parental indignation seized his soul; he perceived, plainly perceived with his wife, that his boys, coarse as they already were both in manners and appearance, would be infinitely degraded in the eyes of his friends, and indeed of every spectator, by their juxta-position with Freddy; and therefore it was that now, passing from the old influence of Miss Godstone, he entered into a new phase of hatred against the boy, incited thereto as much by his feelings as a father as by his pusillanimity as a husband.

If the reader has had patience to peruse this, he will understand why it was that a boy, whose looks and disposition were equally provocative of love and admiration, should on the contrary have unwittingly invited such resentment, such tyranny as those alone dare discover who have nothing to fear from its exercise.

"Always answer when you are called,—do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," said Freddy.

"Come in here: tea's ready," said Mr. Jenkins.

Freddy entered and took a chair on one side of an oblong table surrounded by five boys, at the head of which, and looming through the steam of a huge teapot, appeared the face and shoulders of Mrs. Jenkins. Her husband took a seat at the bottom, and grasping a loaf, divided it into seven great pieces, each of which he scraped with some salt butter, and then handed them round separately to the assembled company at the end of a knife.

The five boys fell to the fare with great heartiness; but Freddy, after a bite at his slice, put it on the table, and refused to go on with it.

"Ain't it good enough for yer?" asked Mr. Jenkins, sharply.

"I don't like the salt, sir." Very likely not; it tasted like gall.

The husband winked at the wife. It was an economical wink, and said quite plainly, "That'll be a saving of his butter, eh?" Then addressing Freddy, "All right, you needn't eat it if you don't like. Look, I will cut the buttered part off. Bill, you'll eat it, won't you?"

"Yes, father, I'll eat it," said Bill.

Henceforth Freddy only had dry bread for his meals.

The conversation at this domestic meal, however entertaining it might have been to an observer of human nature, was anything but agreeable to Freddy. It was a constant series of squabblings: everybody reprimanding everybody else, and nobody happy. Bill, who was supposed to be in charge of the shop, was being continually sent down by his father to see if anybody were there; and this happened so frequently, that Bill, whose face seemed expressive of a certain coarse good nature, at last grew irritable, and swallowing a large cup of boiling tea in a manner that appeared quite miraculous to Freddy, shot down-stairs, with half a slice of bread in his hand, and returned no more.

The young members of the family eyed the apprentice with much curiosity. If he had been a monkey, they could not have surveyed each movement with greater gratification. Before their parents, however, they endeavoured to conceal their emotions, though every now and then, when Freddy would sip his tea or bite his bread, one of them would burst forth into a

[illegible] then as [illegible] assume a grave and [illegible] look.

They took tea at half-past five. At a quarter-past eight the shop was closed, and Freddy was sent down-stairs at least [illegible] to put the shutters up. This was a period of great excitement to the boys. Two of them went up-stairs and drove the shutters up a kind of grating into the street, which were caught by the other three and adjusted to the shop-front. Meanwhile, Mr. Jerkins busied himself in the interior, ever and anon coming to the door and shouting to the boys to make less noise.

Freddy stood outside watching them. Whilst thus occupied, he noticed that by the side of the shop there stood a private door, upon which was a little brass plate bearing the same name that he had read upstairs; only, underneath it, this was added: "Professor of Drawing, French, and German."

The job of the shutters having been concluded, they all adjourned back again into the shop, where they found Mr. Jerkins standing on a ladder arranging a number of small packages in a number of small holes built against the wall. He had been scrutinising the till, and found that

very little money had been taken for the last two days: a fact that tended to render him not a little irritable.

"Well," said he, looking down from his perch upon Freddy, "have you learned the business of the shutters?"

"Yes, sir," answered Freddy.

"All right. To-morrow we'll have him in your place, Bill; and you shall help me here."

Bill seemed much pleased with this arrangement, and said, "Thank yer, father."

"Now, Williams, you may go to bed," said Mr. Jerkins. "You can find your way up-stairs, can't yer?"

Freddy answered "Yes:" and then looking nervously around, as if anxious to know whether it were proper that he should make a bow and say "Good-night"—an appeal which passed quite unnoticed, except by Bill, who gave him a nod as their eyes met,—the little boy pushed open the door, and commenced groping his way up-stairs.

END OF VOL. I.

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